

Minutes
 Island County 2% Committee
 April 1, 2021
 Zoom, due to COVID-19

Quorum: x=members present

Tim Callison X	Com. Melanie Bacon	Jackie Henderson
Debra Bell X	Gregg Lanza X	OH Lodging- Vacant
Dianne Binder X	Joanne Lechner X	Tom Felvey X
Janae Cameron	Jessica McCready	Chet Ross X
Vicki Graham X	Inge Morascini X	Sharon Sappington, EDC X
Lynda Eccles X	Robyn Myers	Jim Woessner

In addition to the above members also in attendance this meeting were: Jordan Bohlander & Leon Aliski, Dean Runyan Associates, James Armstong, Deception Pass State Parks, Selene Muldowney-Stratton, Island Transit. Sherrye Wyatt, Whidbey Camano Islands Tourism Coordinator, Jack Penland, Computer PIX LLC, Scott Rosenkranz, Rosenkranz Productions; Laura Hilton, Is Co. Tourism Contractor.

The meeting was called to order at 11:33 by Chet Ross.

Adoption of the Agenda: No changes were made to the agenda. Vicki Graham motioned, and Dianne Binder, seconded to approve the agenda as presented. Motion approved unanimously.

Minutes from the March 4, 2021 meeting were presented via email. Lynda Eccles motioned, and Vicki Graham seconded to approve the minutes from March 4, 2021 as presented. Motion approved unanimously.

Treasurer’s report was presented by Dianne Binder. The March invoices were approved at the management committee on March 22, 2021.

Old Business

None

New Business

Management Committee Report: Chet Ross reported that items discussed at the meeting are reflected in today’s agenda.

Committee Vacancies: There are two lodging representative positions open on the committee 1 for city of Oak Harbor and 1 for So. Whidbey Lodging.

Spring Campaign: Everyone reported that the guide is extremely exciting and has an exceptional look. It is currently at the printers. Sherrye will receive a large shipment for distribution locally as well. Web component is well represented and informative with lots

of content. The response from those seeing the preliminaries has been extremely positive and there is a great sense of community about this guide.

PR & Media Report see below

SHERRYE WYATT PUBLIC RELATIONS & WRITING

Spring Support Local – Discover Your Islands

Our creative team has worked incredibly hard on this campaign. Special thanks to: Inge Morascini, Rosenkranz Productions, ComputerPIX, Osborne Northwest Public Relations and Laura Hilton! Print piece will be mailed to Island County residents first week of April and to select “out of Island County” residents the last week of April. Some extra copies of the guide will be available to distribute locally on both islands throughout late spring and early summer. A press release and advertising has been lined up to run throughout April in the Crab Cracker, Whidbey Weekly, Whidbey News- Times, Whidbey Life Magazine and South Whidbey Record. Decals, window clings, framed placards, posters and banners have been all ordered. They are to be distributed in early April throughout the county to support the campaign. Full press release is at the end of this report. A sneak peek of the guide is available at whidbeycamanoislands.com/discover-your-islands.

Special thank you to our partners: Island County Commissioners, Economic Development Council of Island County, Island Transit, and the members of the Island County Economic Recovery Task Force.

International Food Wine and Travel Writers Association (IFWTWA) Webinar

Sherrye hosted an 1.5 hour webinar to promote Whidbey and Camano Islands on March 24 for 50 travel writers. Jack Penland and Erin Osborne offered support to the program with video and story highlights including Ciao (cooking demo with Sugar Hubbard Squash), Kristoferson Farm and Captain Whidbey Inn (cooking demo with Penn Cove Mussels). It was very well attended and resulted in a number of follow up requests for more information. A small thank you packet is being mailed to all attendees, to include a copy of the new guide.

Leadership Whidbey

Sherrye participated in the curriculum focused on economic development and presented to the current class through a series of activities including an interview, presentation and Q and A.

Washington Tourism Alliance

GREAT NEWS! It appears the state program is on track now to get between \$10-12 million in the state budget. More details to follow with more information on how our DMO will be able to participate in new promotions.

Camano Island Chamber of Commerce

Sherrye is the guest speaker at the April 15, 2021 meeting.

OSBORNE NORTHWEST PUBLIC RELATIONS

Monthly Overview

Spring and the month of March showed great interest in travel, specifically to the islands due to the open-air options and wide open spaces available. We corresponded this month with many media and influencers from local and national outlets, regarding upcoming travel and content ideas. The destination marketing strategies are working in tandem with the Spring Shop local launch, which will happen in early April. Groundwork and strategy has been laid so we can hit the ground running when the guide and website launch.

Project Management

- Consulted and supported development of video content with Kristoferson Farm, Captain Whidbey and Ciao for use on the IFWTWA webinar.
- Maintained communication with media targets considering spring, summer and fall travel options; vaccine rollout, a move to Phase 3 of the reopening plan and dropping case counts are showing increased interest in travel.
- Developed strategy for Shop Local rollout, when the website launches media relations efforts will target specific influencers and media with the following story angles:
 - **Sip Magazine** – sharing experiences featured in the “From the Islands” section, publisher Kristin is interested in visiting the islands this May (dates TBD) to share live on social feeds and possibly a “Full Pour” episode.
 - **Family and female influencers** like @PassionPurposePassport or @MarcieinMommyland – highlight the arts of Whidbey with a partnership with either by sharing an “Outside the Box Creations” shipment or “Paint like Bob Ross” experience.
 - **Mainstream outlets like KING 5 New Day, KOMO Seattle Refined, Seattle Magazine, Seattle P-I, Seattleite, What’s up NW and Seattle Met** – share a collection of giftable experiences and items featured in the guide, specifically the spa treatments, golf and lifestyle focused items for Mother’s Day, Father’s Day and Graduation Season.
 - **Lifestyle Blog and Influencer @HonestChatter** – holds a very special connection with Whidbey Island and a father that loved birds; we will approach her to collaborate on the Build a Birdhouse experience from Arrowhead Ranch, possibly in honor of Father’s Day and as a gift idea.

Instagram Engagement

- Executed media relations and story pitching on Instagram; shared “#IslandDiscoveries with local tips garnered from the spring teaser campaign.
- Reposted local business news, influencer content and managed the community with likes, comments and interaction on the @GoWhidbeyCamano Instagram

page. Maintained goal of 2-3 posts per week, with stories posting on an ongoing basis.

- Follower count grew from 1,550 followers on February to 1,622 on March 25, an increase of 4.6%.

Media Visits/Pending Press

- **April, TBD, Natalie Campagno with Red Tricycle;** would like to visit for a family friendly feature story this spring.
- **April 25, Peggy Cleveland with Travel Awaits;** she already wrote three stories in this month's coveragebook linked below! She plans to return to take a pizza making class at Ciao, for a future story.
- **August 17-20, Ann Peavey, Seattle Maven;** Whidbey Island is slated to be included in a "Delicious Discoveries" column of this leading PNW travel blog following a summer visits, mid-August (dates pending)
- **KING 5 Evening;** shoot at Lesedi Farm is rescheduled for May due to planting schedules.

Press Highlights include 21 pieces of coverage with an estimated 14.8 million impressions. To view the coverage in full [go here](#) .

COMPUTERPIX

Website

The special Discover Your Islands section of the website went live in late March. The section features similar articles to the upcoming print publication along with numerous other features. Dozens of new businesses have been added to the website and more are being added weekly.

March visitation rebounded from February's dip and (as of 3/25) is at 21.3K visitors. That's 68% ahead of the same period in pandemic-affected 2020 and 43% ahead of "normal" 2019.

16.8K of those visitors, or 78% came to the site through Google searches. Since most of the searches were for basic things like "Whidbey Island" or "Deception Pass" I put the reason for the increase as more awareness of Whidbey and Camano Islands coupled with a general public desire to get out of the house and go somewhere.

This week's report from Destination Analysts underscores that desire with 63% of those surveyed expressing excitement over traveling again.

Video

Four new videos have been completed.

- Captain Whidbey
- Ciao
- Kristoferson Farm

- 3 Sisters Market

Email

The March email had an open rate of 26.5% versus an industry standard of 24.4%.

[https://mailchi.mp/whidbeycamanoislands/americas-newest-national-scenic-byway?e=\[UNIQID\]](https://mailchi.mp/whidbeycamanoislands/americas-newest-national-scenic-byway?e=[UNIQID])

PRESS RELEASE

WHIDBEY AND CAMANO ISLANDS TOURISM LAUNCHES NEW GUIDE TO ENCOURAGE LOCAL DISCOVERIES

“Discover Your Islands” highlights recreation and exploration for new ways to get out, shop local and try something new this season

(Caption L-R: *Discover Your Islands* offers local tips on where, what and how to picnic; the new digital and printed guide offers ideas for exploring and sampling all things of the islands; The guide is available at whidbeycamanoislands.com/discover-your-islands, with a print publication mailed to Island County residents, and throughout Washington state in April)

Island County, Wash. March 30, 2021 — [Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism](http://WhidbeyandCamanoIslandsTourism)

launches *Discover Your Islands*, a new digital and printed guide with ideas for exploring and sampling all things of the islands. The guide is available at

whidbeycamanoislands.com/discover-your-islands, with a print publication mailed to Island County residents, and throughout Washington state in April.

“In a typical year, millions of visitors flock to our islands from all over the world. During the pandemic, we want to remind locals why,” said Sherrye Wyatt, film liaison, PR and marketing manager for Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism. “While we all love a favorite shop, trail or gallery, the islands are so full of new things to try and explore.

Discover Your Islands connects communities and business with new ideas for exploring, sipping and dining local.”

The team at Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism relied on local insights to inform the content. Many islanders contributed memories and traditions held dear, sourcing ideas and tips from island residents quoted throughout the guide, and at

[@GoWhidbeyCamano](https://www.instagram.com/GoWhidbeyCamano) on Instagram under the Hashtag [#IslandDiscoveries](https://www.instagram.com/IslandDiscoveries).

Visitors and locals find trip inspiration for adventures close to home, ways support local retailers and a long list of where to sip, dine and more. In curating the guide, new trends and points of interest for spring emerged, including:

- [From Island Soil to Island Tables](#) shares craft producers, farms and foods special to the islands, including three new cideries Misfit Island Cider, Camano Cider and Driftwood Hard Cider, as well as opportunities for U-Pick at Bell’s Farm and Ananda Farm.
- [Hands at Work](#) features opportunities to view or get involved in the local arts community. Get hands on in Coupeville with a local artist offering the chance to Paint Like Bob Ross. Little hands can get busy at home with Outside the Box

Creations [or a bird house workshop offered virtually or in person at Arrowhead Ranch.](#)

- [Active Island Lifestyle](#) holds ideas for getting out, or gifting local for moms, dads and grads. Try Movement Arts or Chrysalis Yoga Shala in Oak Harbor for yoga, or The Seaside Spa and Salon in Coupeville, or the Camano Island Day Spa for a taste of island bliss through massage or reflexology in a calming environment. Tee off for Father's Day celebrations at Holmes Harbor Golf Course, Whidbey Golf Club, Useless Bay Country Club or Camaloch Golf Course on Camano Island.

Additional categories share ideas from where to picnic to live or silver screen entertainment. Find more island inspiration and plan to try something new at whidbeycamanoislands.com/discover-your-islands. *Discover Your Islands* was conceptualized and developed to support local businesses by Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism, in partnership with Island Transit, Island County EDC and Island County Economic Recovery Task Force

About Whidbey and Camano Islands

Drive off the mainland to find two of the most accessible and scenic island destinations in the Pacific Northwest. Camano and Whidbey sit just north of Seattle, a short trip via bridge or ferry. Offering a different experience with each season, the islands provide locally inspired shops and restaurants, dynamic experiences for a variety of interests, recreation and beach combing. Rich history and a healthy dose of local color in all mediums is provided by the region's many artists. Lodging options range from nationally renowned hotels with farm to table dining to secret spots ideal for a quiet retreat. For more information on amenities, lodging and a calendar of events visit whidbeycamanoislands.com. Connect on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) via [@GoWhidbeyCamano](#).

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Media Contacts: ON Public Relations for Island County Tourism
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Chamber Roundtable-

CamaBeach State Park: Spring break and the park cabins are stuffed. Daily the parking lots are full. So there are definitely more folks are out and about. The Everett Harold recently did a piece on the park and it was a great story. Lots of growth at the park and it is still poised to grow more 60-70% of the visitors are first time visitors. Park revenues are poised for a great recovery.

Oak Harbor: We are in the middle of shooting a video entitled "Amazing Island Escape" and we think its going very well. Holland Happening will not be happening in the traditional way this year but there will be a food truck component that will be located up by the Chamber. We are still waiting to see if we can hold July 4th fireworks event. Gregg Lanza reported that the Mainstreet group is working on pop-up parks and looking to

expand “Serendipity Lane” to help drive people from Pioneer Way down to the waterfront. Reporting also that Wildwood Farm is very busy with trail rides and guests. Coupeville: Lots of peoples on the streets on the weekends. The area is very busy with Air-BnB’s and vacation rental bookings. Main Events are still being postponed and some are looking forward to different formats. Plain Aire will happen this year with the use of outdoor tents. The Haunting of Fort Casey will not happen this year and The Penn Cove Water Festival is postponing until 2022.

EDC: Sharon reported that there will be monies available for various small business categories in the County. She is waiting to find out the requirements. Other co-operative grants are possible.

Langley: Chamber is working on getting this years street market up and running. Under development is an electronic walking map for downtown. The Chamber is moving forward with plans for the Fall Harvest Festival. Mayor Tim Callison feels very hopeful about the up coming summer season for Langley. Announces that 2 new restaurants opened during the pandemic economy and are doing well. Tom Felvey mentioned that their season is looking good as well.

Freeland: This years July 3rd Fireworks celebration has been postponed until 2022. After consulting with the state it was felt that the crowds gathered would still be unsafe given the projected level of vaccination.

As a final note Chet recognized member Joanne Lechner for her years of service on the Island County Tourism Committee and noted that Joanne has been on the committee since the committee was formed.

Meeting adjourned at 12:31pm.

Next regular meeting is May 6, 2021, via Zoom, from 11am-1pm.

Meeting recorded by Joanne Lechner and reviewed for submission by Sherrye Wyatt.