

Minutes
 Island County 2% Committee
 June 3, 2021
 Zoom, due to COVID-19

Quorum: x=members present

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

In addition to the above members, guests also in attendance this meeting were: Selene Muldowney- Stratton, Marketing & Communications Officer Island Transit; Sherrye Wyatt, Whidbey Camano Islands Tourism Coordinator, Jack Penland, Computer PIX LLC, Scott Rosenkranz, Rosenkranz Production.

The meeting was called to order at 11:30am by Chet Ross.

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

4. Minutes from the May 6, 2021 meeting were presented via email. No changes were made to the minutes. Jessica motioned, and Deb seconded to approve the minutes from May 6, 2021 as presented. Motion approved unanimously.

5. Treasurer’s report was presented by Dianne Binder. Conversation circled around the 90+% increase in year over year funds reported in Unincorporated Island County. Most agreed the numbers were correct, but that volume and rate increases were the reason and VRBO and Airbnb are doing very well. The invoices were previously approved in the Management Committee Meeting.

6. Old Business

7. New Business

- a. Vacancies were discussed with OH Lodging and South Whidbey lodging. Sherrye has interest from a Vacasa regional rep or TARA properties rep to participate. She will further investigate this connection. Also, the Langley town position will soon be vacated through the Mayor Callison’s departure. Chet will contact the mayor’s office after there is a newly appointed mayor to find out about a new appointee.
- b. WTA Destination Workshop was beneficial, and it is important we are active and participate.

- c. PR and Media Report- continued conversation about working to get tourism members and chamber members to learn about each of our local community and industries so we can connect visitors. Further discussion about provision of a trail map for visitors. Jack showed two recent videos created on the Sculpture Park and Fort Casey Inn with accolades from everyone.
- d. Next meeting will be July 8. We will revisit in person meetings in the fall. Suggestions were made for continuing zoom meetings, with in person meetings quarterly and potentially adding FAM trips when we meet in person.

SHERRYE WYATT PUBLIC RELATIONS & WRITING

Washington Tourism Alliance

You should have all been invited and hopefully RSVP'd yes to participate in the WTA Destination Development outreach meeting set for June 2 11:00 a.m. – 3 p.m. We are working together with San Juan Islands. There will be discussion and break out sessions, so come prepared for that. There is still room for participants from Island County. RSVP here if you have not yet: [Destination Development Workshop - Islands Region \(constantcontact.com\)](http://constantcontact.com)

Agenda from WTA:

11:00am to Noon: WTA Update – You'll hear from David Blandford and Mike Moe about the latest from the WTA. You'll also hear about TREAD Maps, a new app that's coming that will give real-time information about trails, beaches, and activities.

Noon to 2pm: Our facilitator Dan Moore will share case studies about what some destinations are doing to manage tourism in their area. There will also be interactive small group discussions about shared assets and challenges in the Islands Region.

2pm to 3pm: Small groups discussions will lead to a discussion with the full group about existing gaps that can be filled and supported by the WTA.

We know that this is a busy time of year. We hope that you can attend the full workshop, but we completely understand if you need to step away here and there to attend to other things. We look forward to seeing you on Wednesday!

Spring Support Local – Discover Your Islands

We have guides, decals and window clings. Just let us know! Please direct your members to email info@whidbeycamanoislands.com to order more free materials while supplies last. Website is showing some traction from the Kirkland/Port Townsend mailing this month! Sherrye was interviewed by the North County Outlook on May 20 for a feature on island getaways (they did Camano last year, Whidbey is featured this year).

Trade Shows/Events

Sherrye represented the county at the virtual Northwest Weddings Show on May 15.

Sherrye attended the Penn Cove Brewing open house on May 20. Sherrye also participated in the WTA/Port of Seattle workshop on international travel receptives on May 18 . Laura will represent Island County at the International Food Wine and Travel Writers Association (IFTWA) conference in November 2021, which hopes to be held in person. We will be a partner at the \$1,000 level in 2021. We had a full page ad in their international magazine at no charge:

<https://issuu.com/foodwinetravelmagazine/docs/mayfwt2021/10>

Whidbey Scenic Isle Way - Byways Training, CMP Update

Sherrye participated in four week series of four 90-minute workshops offered by the National Scenic Byways Foundation regarding “The Visitor Experience” on the Whidbey Scenic Isle Way. She is developing a plan to update the Corridor Management Plan in 2021. The Digital Edition of Scenic Washington is available here:

<https://75960731.flowpaper.com/ScenicWA2021RoadtripGuideFlipbook/#page=1>

Film Project/Festival

Sherrye and Laura participated in the Whidbey Island Film Festival (May 20-23) along with Amy Lilliard, executive director of Washington Filmworks. Also some of the cast/production people from Midday Black, Midnight Blue participated. They are set to begin filming the first week of June. Other film projects in the works include another independent film (June/July) and Jet Set Travel TV show on both islands (September). Scott and Dimarco’s Joy of the Journey filming went well on May 25-27.

Ideas for Future Discussion

A few things on the horizon for Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism to explore are **hospitality training** for front line volunteers and staff to enrich the visitor experience. May be simply new fact sheets/binder, or as elaborate as a program where a certificate is earned:

Burlington, Ontario [Ambassador Training - Tourism Burlington Website](#)

Denbighshire, Wales [Denbighshire Tourism Ambassador Course – Ambassador Wales](#)

USA Certified Tourism Ambassador (CTA) program.

[CTANetwork.com - Certified Tourism Ambassador Network](#) activated in only 2 WA destinations

BELLEVUE, WA [Certified Tourism Ambassador \(CTA\) Program | Bellevue, WA](#)

[\(visitbellevuewa.com\)](#) THURSTON COUNTY – OLYMPIA [Ambassador Scholarships \(experienceolympia.com\)](#)

Also, on the horizon is ramping up our overall **destination development planning** and revisiting the idea of **transformational travel**, sustainability and stewardship as the islands continue to grow and evolve <https://www.transformational.travel/>.

Also bringing together all the various **trail maps** on both islands and integrating them into one place online and in print needs to be revisited. One time we looked at what Beach Watchers had incorporated into the original *Getting the Waters Edge* guide.

OSBORNE NORTHWEST PUBLIC RELATIONS

Monthly Overview

The month of May proved successful for Whidbey Island with the national travel site Travel Awaits, and its [2021 Best of Travel Awards](#). We recently engaged with one of their northwest writers for a visit to Whidbey and Camano Islands and received mention in her feature story on the Cascade Loop. Winning categories in the travel awards include Double Bluff Beach as Best Beach, Coupeville as Best Small Town, Deception Pass as Best Campground. Kapaws Iskreme in Coupeville also listed as a finalist in the Best Ice Cream Shop category.

Project Management

- Hosted an episode of “The Full Pour” with Sip Magazine on Whidbey Island on May 5, featuring interviews from the Captain Whidbey with Camano Cider, Spoiled Dog Winery, Penn Cove Brewing and The Bar at Captain Whidbey.

Instagram Engagement

- Worked with @SipMagazine on a Whidbey Island getaway giveaway, resulting in high levels of engagement and new followers.
- 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 1,691 on April 25 to 1,780 on May 25, an increase of 5%.

Media Visits/Pending Press

- **May 5-6; Kristin Bacon, Sip Magazine;** planning a beverage focused visit to cover for digital channels and research for future print stories
- **June 2 (Daytrip), influencer @MarcieinMommyland;** will visit for a daytrip from their new vacation home on Samish Island for social content and a blog post.
- **May /June TBD, Natalie Campagno, freelance travel writer at Red Tricycle;** would like to visit for a family friendly feature story this spring.
- **June 23-25, Sharon Kurtz, Go Nomad and Rovology;** planning a visit to cover a culinary vacation on Whidbey Island for popular national travel blogs.
- **July 19-23, Therese Iknoian, HI Travel Tales,** visiting both Whidbey and Camano Islands to meet with chefs, food and beverage producers for profiles and destinations stories that will appear on this travel blog in addition to their Instagram page @HITravelTales
- **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)

- **Sara Franklin, Sept. 20-24, freelance writer with *Travel + Leisure*** to cover the food and drinks, culinary culture of Whidbey Island.
- **Fall TBD;** the following spring 2020 media visits are in the process of rescheduling, with additional anticipated:
 - **Kelly Stilwell, influencer and travel blogger at [Food, Fun and Faraway Places](#)**, is planning a visit to cover Washington’s islands for her blog and social channels.
 - **Kristen Pope, freelance writer contributing to *National Geographic, Discover, Smithsonian, Audubon, Fodor’s* and others;** we hope to bring her to the islands in Fall 2021 to research story ideas.
 - **Oct. 10-12 or 16-18; Camano Island FAM Tour, TBEX attendees (TBD).**

Press Highlights include 18 pieces of coverage with an estimated 26.4 million impressions. To view the coverage in full [go here](#).

COMPUTERPIX

Book Direct

If you go to the tourism website, you’ll notice something new in the sections where you can book reservations; a tab for AirBNB. This is a soft launch of the option. I worked with them to solve some of the ideas discussed at the prior board meeting and they were able to:

- emphasize a map view of properties so that it will be easy to see which are on our islands, and which are not
- add a note telling site visitors to carefully look at the addresses of properties as they might not be on the islands

The Book Direct Performance Summary for April is attached. In April, there were 1306 referrals to either lodging booking engines or web sites.

“Discover Your Islands” and the Website

A large number of the remaining “Discover” guides were mailed to Kirkland and Port Townsend residents in mid-May.

Here is how the QR Code use played out as the guide was mailed:

QR Code	Scans	First Scan	Recent Scan
Page 27 - Win an Island Getaway	56	May 12	May 26
Page 5 - Embrace of Salish Sea	21	May 13	May 25
Page 9 - Island Soil	9	May 13	May 23
Page 12 - Island Discoveries	8	May 14	May 25
Page 15 - Share Discoveries - Facebook	15	May 13	May 27

Page 27 - Stress Free travel	11	May 10	May 23
Page 18 - The Show Must Go On	6	May 12	May 25
Page 20 - Hands at Work	12	May 14	May 25
Page 17 - Give Your Home an Island Touch	7	May 13	May 25
Page 25 - A Healthy and Active Lifestyle	8	May 13	May 23

With regard to the website, there was a noticeable bump in website visitors from Kirkland in the period of May 12 to 18 as compared to the previous period of May 5 to 11. There was a 97% increase in users (168 users vs. 85) from the Kirkland area. There was 95% bump (39 users vs. 29) from Port Townsend. Over the entire site, there was a 16% bump, so some of the Kirkland and Port Townsend increase can be attributed to seasonal changes.

Website Traffic

Google Analytics shows May 2021 (thru May 27) is up 55.9% over the same period in 2020 and up 30.1 over the same period in 2019.

e. Chamber Roundtable-

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 1:05pm.

Next regular meeting is July 8, 2021, via Zoom, from 11am-1pm.

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