

Meeting Minutes
Island County 2% Joint Advisory Board
Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism
July 8, 2021
Zoom, due to COVID-19

Quorum: x=members present

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

In addition to the above members, guests also in attendance were: Erin Osborne, owner of Osborne Northwest Public Relations, Selene Muldowney- Stratton, Marketing & Communications Officer Island Transit; Sherrye Wyatt, Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism PR & Marketing Manager and Film Liaison, Laura Hilton, Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism Special Projects, and Scott Rosenkranz, Rosenkranz Productions. The new Mayor of Langley Scott Chaplin briefly joined the meeting.

Due to the lack of a quorum, at 11 a.m., Dianne Binder presented the treasurer’s report first and the committee discussed the recovery of county tourism and increased overnight stays.

The meeting was officially called to order at 11:20 a.m. by Chet Ross.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

No changes were made to the agenda. Deb Bell moved, and Vicki Graham seconded the motion to approve the agenda as presented. Motion approved unanimously.

2. Meeting Minutes

Minutes from the June 3, 2021 meeting were presented via email. No changes were made to the minutes. Vicki Graham moved to approve, and Lynda Eccles seconded the motion to approve the minutes from June 3, 2021 as presented. Motion approved unanimously.

3. Treasure’s Report

Financial reports were presented prior to the official meeting beginning.

4. Old Business

There was no old business

5. New Business

Scott Rosenkranz, who serves as the contracted graphic design and branding consultant, gave a presentation on the trails field guide project with the working title “25 Island Hikes.” He and Sherrye Wyatt are working on the details to prepare a proposal to move ahead with the project.

Erin Osborne, who serves as the contracted media relations expert, gave a presentation covering the past, present and future efforts and results of her work to gain earned media and influencer coverage. She shared a video of a Good Morning America story, a slide deck and her coverage book. They are all linked here:

- [Presentation](#) (this has links to GMA and also the full Coverage Report within)
- [Good Morning America Clip](#)
- [Coveragebook](#), January – June, 2021.

6. Report

The full monthly tourism report is presented here:

SHERRYE WYATT PUBLIC RELATIONS & WRITING

Washington Tourism Alliance

Sherrye submitted a request for reimbursement for additional COVID 19 economic recovery funding to replenish the budget for expenses that exceeded what was covered by the Island County commissioners from April 2020-May 2021. Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism has been awarded \$54,444.45 and we have received the physical check which will be deposited into our account at the county.

Spring Support Local – Discover Your Islands

The final 3,000 approx. guides were put onto the two Whidbey Island ferry routes for distribution June 24-August 31. We are still waiting for the ferry galleys to open and all restrictions to be lifted in ferry terminals/aboard boats before launching our 12 month campaign with ferries, which also includes banners at Clinton and videos running on all screens systemwide. There are limitations as to what those videos and banners at terminals may promote. We will be promoting regional branding and not specific events. Tentatively looking to run the entire campaign September 2021-August 2022

Film

The independent film Midday Black, Midnight Blue wrapped up on June 30. A car commercial is scouting Whidbey Island. The Jet Set will be filming an episode on both Camano and then Whidbey Island, September 12-16.

Transportation

Sherrye has registered for the North Sound Transportation Alliance Panel Series: Next Steps for Implementing N. Sound Passenger-Only Ferry Routes on July 9. Sherrye is also working in statewide and national coalitions of Scenic Byways.

Collaboration with Tourism/Chambers on Advertising Buys

We all get "hit up" by the many of the same advertisers all year round. Sherrye thought if we explore coordinating our efforts with Chambers, and think more strategically for 2022, we'd have more leverage with advertisers to get a better deal (including add-ons like digital/sponsored editorial content). We'd also have less interruptive phone calls and

make a bigger impact. We started this conversation pre-Covid. On June 30, Sherrye held a Zoom meeting with 425 Magazine and Seattle Met. Three chambers participated.

Field Guides Project

Island County's trails provide healthy outdoor experiences for everyone. While there are some printed guides and online materials, there is nothing that is in print that is free, that touches on both islands, and provides just a selection of 25 top hikes. The guide would not be done in competition with more comprehensive guides already available, but rather in partnership with those organizations. Scott will be sharing some research he has found on the project. We may expand to do other field guides as part of an ongoing series. We will be seeking financial support from the Island County Commissioners.

OSBORNE NORTHWEST PUBLIC RELATIONS

Monthly Overview

Travel is reopening and we are tempering our efforts with a return to destination marketing PR tactics, as well with an understanding of the evolving local business climate. With business at capacity and working to staff up, our marketing efforts are focused on longer lead visits that will yield shoulder season coverage as we approach what we hope to be a more predictable year. We have three writers flying in from out of market with national outlets like *National Geographic* and *Travel + Leisure*, in addition to travel influencers. One to two more writers of this level are anticipated by the end of the year. These visits are a result of ongoing communication from 2021 as well as rescheduled visits from 2020.

Project Management

- Maintained communication with the team regarding COVID changes and news; shared updated news and stories for June visits which included:
 - **June 2, influencer @MarcieinMommyland**; will visit for a daytrip from their new vacation home on Samish Island for social content and a blog post.
 - **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.
- Tracked and booked flights, car rentals and opportunities for upcoming out of state travel writers.

Instagram Engagement

- Reposted influencer and local business 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 1,780 on May 25 to 1,818 on June 25, an increase of 2.13%;

Media Visits/Pending Press

- **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)
- **Kristen Pope, Sept. 14-17, 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.**
- **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.
 - **Oct. 10-12 or 16-18; Camano Island FAM Tour, TBEX attendees (TBD).**

Press Highlights include 12 pieces of coverage with an estimated 20.6 million impressions. To view the coverage in full [go here](#).

COMPUTERPIX

Website Lodging

In the previous report I noted that, working with Book Direct, we had added AirBNB listings to the website. We should have VRBO listings, as well, in a couple of weeks. Book Direct identified 360 VRBO properties in Island County and they will all be listed. When completed, we will have the most comprehensive lodging listing anywhere for Island County.

Book Direct

It’s worth noting that people are searching for lodging, on average, 51 days into the future. Also, since we’re in the busy season, the ROI of our costs for May was a whopping 4400% or 44 dollars spent on lodging through Book Direct for every dollar we spend on Book Direct! I have also been reviewing our individual lodging listings. I verified either through email or phone calls that several properties were sold or are no longer in business and have been removed. I’m spending a few hours each week on this project.

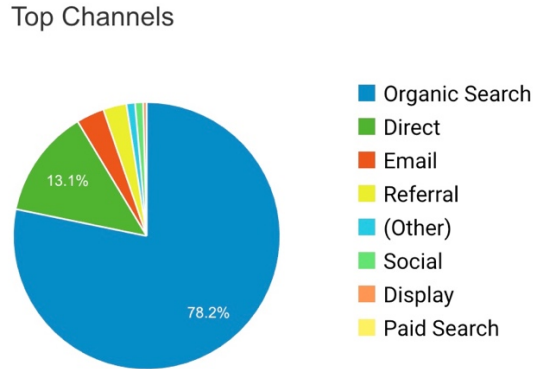
Website Traffic

This is typically the peak time for visits to the website. There were about 58,500 visitors to the site in June. Cloudflare measured 97,660 visitors but, for most sites, about 40% of the traffic is other computers which brings us to the lower estimate.

Google, which always shows lower results due to people using ad-blocking software, showed 42,066 visitors.

How People Get to the Website

Most of the website traffic comes via Organic Search, with 78% of the traffic coming via Google or other search engines. The next largest way people get to the site is direct entry (web browser bookmarks or people’s browsers automatically filling in the website address). Here is a complete breakdown from Google.



Website Re-Org

Some of the “Things to Do” categories and listings were reorganized to make things more logical and eliminate some overlapping categories.

Newsletter

The latest newsletter featured the Price Sculpture Forest Video and saw an open rate of 25%. When the newsletter was re-sent just to those who didn’t open the first email, another 12.7% opened it. Here is a link to the newsletter just in case you missed it. [https://mailchi.mp/whidbeycamanoislands/contest-ending-and-new-sculpture-forests?e=\[UNIQID\]](https://mailchi.mp/whidbeycamanoislands/contest-ending-and-new-sculpture-forests?e=[UNIQID])

7. Chamber/Member Round Tables

Those committee members present on the call briefed the committee with current events and concerns in their communities.

8. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 12:50 pm.

Next regular meeting is August 5, 2021, via Zoom, from 11 am-1 pm. It is possible the August meeting will be held in person, that is yet TBD.

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