

**Meeting Minutes
Island County 2% Joint Advisory Board
Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism
October 7, 2021
Zoom, due to COVID-19**

Quorum: x=members present

Elected Town of Langley - Vacant	Com. Melanie Bacon x	Jackie Henderson
Lodging Camano Island - Vacant	Gregg Lanza	OH Lodging- Vacant
Dianne Binder	S. Whidbey lodging- Vacant	Tom Felvey x
Christina Swan (for Clinton Chamber) x	Jessica McCready x	Chet Ross
Vicki Graham x	Inge Morascini x	Sharon Sappington, EDC x
Lynda Eccles	Robyn Myers x	Jim Woessner

In addition to the above members, guests also in attendance were: Jack Penland, Computer Pix LLC, and Sherrye Wyatt, Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism PR & Marketing Manager and Film Liaison, Scott Rosenkranz, Rosenkranz Productions, Laura Hilton, Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism special projects.

Meeting called to order at 11:05pm by Commissioner Bacon.

1. **Adoption of Agenda** – no quorum at the time of approval
2. **Approval of September 2021 Minutes** - approved - approved with no objections
3. **Treasurer's Report and Invoice review** - all invoices were approved at the management committee meeting. There were no objections to the invoices presented.
4. **Old Business: None**
5. **New Business:**
 - a. **Management Committee Report-** Tourism Update 2022 - Sherrye Wyatt shared the outline for the strategic planning for 2022 with the transformational travel council. She encouraged committee members to begin creating lists of stakeholders to participate. See the PR report information below.
 - b. **Datafy:** Jack shared the Datafy (formerly See Source) data and explained trends and potential for reports. There is vast information available, but the team is working on the best way to share it.
 - c. **PR Media Report:**
The full monthly tourism report is presented here:

SHERRYE WYATT PUBLIC RELATIONS & WRITING

On September 22, Sherrye and Erin presented a thorough tourism update before the **Council of Governments (COG)**. They gave an overview of past, present and future projects and activities with influencers since the pandemic. This was followed by a

discussion about tourism growth. Sherrye presented an update on the trails guide and strategic planning next year with the **Transformational Travel Council (TTC)** www.transformational.travel

One timely article shared with COG was:

<https://www.harpersbazaararabia.com/culture/culture-featured-news/what-is-transformational-travel-holidaying-with-a-purpose-is-the-new-switching-off>

THE TRANSFORMATIVE DESTINATIONS PROGRAM *(described by TTC)*

The world demands innovative solutions to legacy problems associated with our sector such as “overtourism” and its inherent negative environmental impacts. Destinations must bravely and rapidly adapt to a changing world. TTC is offering a solution to lead forward-looking destinations on a path to a regenerative tourism process that is designed to improve host, traveler, community, and environmental well-being and help them flourish.

Regenerative Future Together: Destinations worldwide are adapting to new norms and needs. Many are embracing sustainability or deepening their commitments to protecting their natural and cultural heritage. Some are entirely reimagining their approach to tourism and how they measure success. Transformational travel and regenerative tourism are catalysts for this evolution. This evolution is inclusive and involves balancing the needs of nature, communities, and the economy and using tourism to encourage the healthy functioning of ecosystems and people’s role within them.

The Intent

- To empower destination stakeholders to transform their visitor economies and improve long-term resident, traveler, and environmental well-being
- To promote the transition to a transformational economy at a destination level through the development and implementation of a framework to foster regenerative tourism
- To support participating **Early Adopter** destinations worldwide in becoming recognized as global pioneers and leaders within the emergent transformational travel philosophy

The Outputs

Participating destinations can expect to benefit from active involvement in defining Regenerative Tourism Principles for Destinations, development of an action plan through an inclusive, stakeholder-driven process, and a license to use the TTC's transformational travel curriculum to scale up transformational travel offerings among suppliers and host communities.

- **Unification:** Stakeholders are unified through a regenerative tourism process and in their approach to sustainable destination management, development, and marketing.
- **Strategic Action Plan:** The development of a living Strategic Action Plan to guide implementation and recovery from COVID-19 through an inclusive, stakeholder-driven process.
- **Train the Trainer:** Build local capacity through dynamic training created by the TTC for the purpose of scaling up transformational travel offerings among practitioners and host communities.
- **Meaningful Travel:** Tourism practitioners are empowered to design and foster experiential and transformative travel that drives engagement, deepens connection, and expands meaning.
- **Marketing + Promotion:** An opportunity to use the **Early Adopter** program to develop a marketing narrative for branding the destination as a thought leader in regenerative tourism and, transformational travel.
- **The Process & Participants:** TTC works with destination leaders and stakeholders in cooperatively realizing a regenerative future for their destinations. Through a multi-stage, iterative process TTC inspires change by shifting mindsets and integrating transformative and regenerative design principles into a strategic approach, planning, and product development.
- **Destination Leaders:** Including the DMO, tourism board, and community-level leaders actively supporting their tourism sectors through the provision of accessible solutions to some challenges and relevant issues we are all confronting.
- **Hosts & Practitioners:** Including tour operators, lodges, retreats, guides, and experience providers working on the local level to consciously design and create the conditions for transformation of people and place.

Update on the Whidbey & Camano Islands Tourism Trails Guide

Scott and Sherrye have been in communication with **Sound Water Stewards** and Island County to determine which trails to exclude from the guide. Progress is underway with plans to produce the guide and pay for all the design in the 2021 budget and pay for the printing in 2022 budget. A video component for the website is being created by Jack.

Sherrye is working with the **Port of Seattle** on a virtual “FAM” tour of Whidbey Island through video and slides which will be shared with UK and Australian travel buyers. The presentation will be made in late October to 50 travel operators from Australia and New Zealand. Jack is helping produce the video, we plan to do one for Camano Island in 2022.

TREAD Map App may be rolling out in more Washington counties in 2022

The Washington Tourism Alliance (WTA) announced a partnership with TREAD (Trails, Recreation, Education, Advocacy, Development) and Dharma Maps to deploy the new TREAD Map App pilot program that combines a consumer-facing location-based app with real-time trail and recreational data, updates and advisories. The pilot program is operational in the Trails and Lakes region of Central Washington (Kittitas, Grant, Douglas, Chelan, and Okanagan counties),

The cost to DMOs like us may be as much as \$30,000 per year, so we are still waiting to learn more and weighing the pros and cons of how/if we can participate.

The TREAD Map App offers comprehensive up-to-date recreation maps that include hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding trails, along with custom layers and up-to-the minute alerts with current safety information. The user interface allows land managers and recreationists to share current conditions, photos, weather information, tips on crowded trail heads with alternate suggestions and more.

OSBORNE NORTHWEST PUBLIC RELATIONS

Monthly Overview

The month of September has held a long-anticipated opportunity to bring media and influencers to the islands to gather shoulder season content. While the Delta variant slowed the volume of anticipated visits, we were able to successfully execute visits this month, with coverage anticipated in national media outlets like USA Today GO, National Geographic, Smithsonian, as well as regional and key influencer channels like Red Tricycle and KING 5 Evening. The bell curve of visits peaked this month, and in the coming months we plan to focus on strategic planning, research and development and story inspiration for 2022.

Project Management

- Developed a story sheet highlighting news and story trends for use at the IFWTWA conference (we will participate virtually) and in ongoing media relations through 2022.
- Participated in presentation to the Council of Governments; shared year to date PR work and participated in discussion for 2022 planning.

- Maintained communication with the team regarding COVID changes and news; shared updated news and stories for September visits which included:
 - **Jean Chen-Smith, Sept. 1-10, USA Today Travel Syndicate, Travel + Leisure;** Jean was on assignment with USA Today to explore travel options for family reunions and multi-generational travel for USA Today's syndicate. She also freelances for 1889 and Travel + Leisure. She visited Camano, Sept. 1-4; Coupeville Sept. 4-7 and Langley, Sept. 7-10.
 - **Natalie Compagno, Sept. 15-17; freelance writer for Red Tricycle** is interested in exploring for fall story ideas; developing an itinerary to include The Treehouse Whidbey, Captain Whidbey and additional experiences during her stay.
 - **Kristen Pope, Sept. 14-17, freelance writer contributing to *National Geographic, Discover, Smithsonian, Audubon, Fodor's* and others;** visited to research story ideas for the outlets listed above focused on eco-tourism, heritage travel and outdoor opportunities.

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 1,941 on August 26 to 2,005 on September 29, an increase of 3.3%.

Media Visits/Pending Press

- **Spring 2022;** the following 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.
 - **Sara Franklin, RESCHEDULED/Postponed for Spring 2022, freelance writer with *Travel + Leisure*** to cover the food and drinks, culinary culture of Whidbey Island.

Press Highlights include 13 pieces of coverage with an estimated 13.3 million impressions. To view the coverage in full [go here](#) .

COMPUTERPIX

September Digital Report

Fresh Content

Video | Two Minute Trailer: Camano Island's Cranberry Lake

The newest "Two-Minute Trailer" highlights a trail to Camano Island's Cranberry Lake. After we have four or five published to the website, there will be a special directory page for these hikes. <https://whidbeycamanoislands.com/our-media/cranberry-lake-trail/>

Story | Go Ahead! Be Awestruck! It's Good For you!

This blog post looks at the idea of why visiting some of the area's natural wonders can be good for you and the science behind that.

<https://whidbeycamanoislands.com/go-ahead-be-awestruck-its-good-for-you/>

Page | Haunting of Coupeville

For several years we've had a page devoted to rounding up most of the activities. It's updated for 2021.

<https://whidbeycamanoislands.com/the-haunting-of-coupeville/>

Home Page | Visitor Center Link

The Visitor Centers are now more visible on the website home page. They've always been there, but now it's easier to find them.

<https://whidbeycamanoislands.com/>

Newsletter

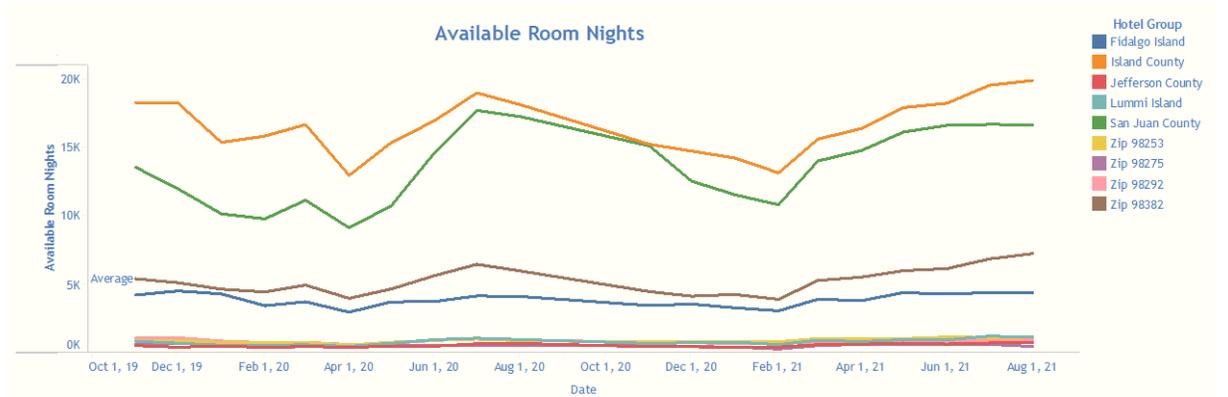
The newsletter went out Friday, October 1, and features The Haunting of Coupeville along with links to the above new content. It had an outdoors theme to it. It was sent a second time just to those who didn't open the first email. Between the two, 5,824 people opened the newsletter

<https://us12.campaign-archive.com/?u=11380ced8373e34392577e79b&id=463c81a3a6>

Topics	Clicks	Unique Clicks
Haunting of Coupeville	349	280
Contest	255	208
Lodging	131	96
Awestruck	78	68
LaConner	100	68
Cranberry Lake	79	67

Air DNA Available Room Nights

Here is a look at how the number of available room nights compares with other nearby locations. The number of available rooms varies month by month as many properties are available only certain times of the year.



This next chart looks at the number of room nights available each month in Island County and how many of those were booked. You see that, while the number of nights has increased in 2021 compared with prior years, there are many more bookings than there used to be.



Thank-you to Datafy (Seesource) for creating this dataset.

Book Direct Monthly Report

On the next page is the August report, the latest for which we have detailed data like this. Preliminary data for September shows 1217 referrals, versus 2174 for August. I've noted it before, but it bears repeating that the 25-34 age demographic is very comfortable with using this type of booking system.

New Possible Challenges for All of Us Who Send Group Email

Apple unveiled in September it's new operating system that is going to have an impact on email marketing efforts, including ours.

Many websites require visitors provide email addresses to receive things like reports, special offers, or some other special information. At that point, that visitor is on yet another email list.

But Apple is changing that.

Subscribers to their iCloud service may now create special one-time "burner" emails that people may use when they sign up for a special offer. The burner address forwards email to the person's email account. That person can then delete the burner address at any time without affecting their main email traffic.

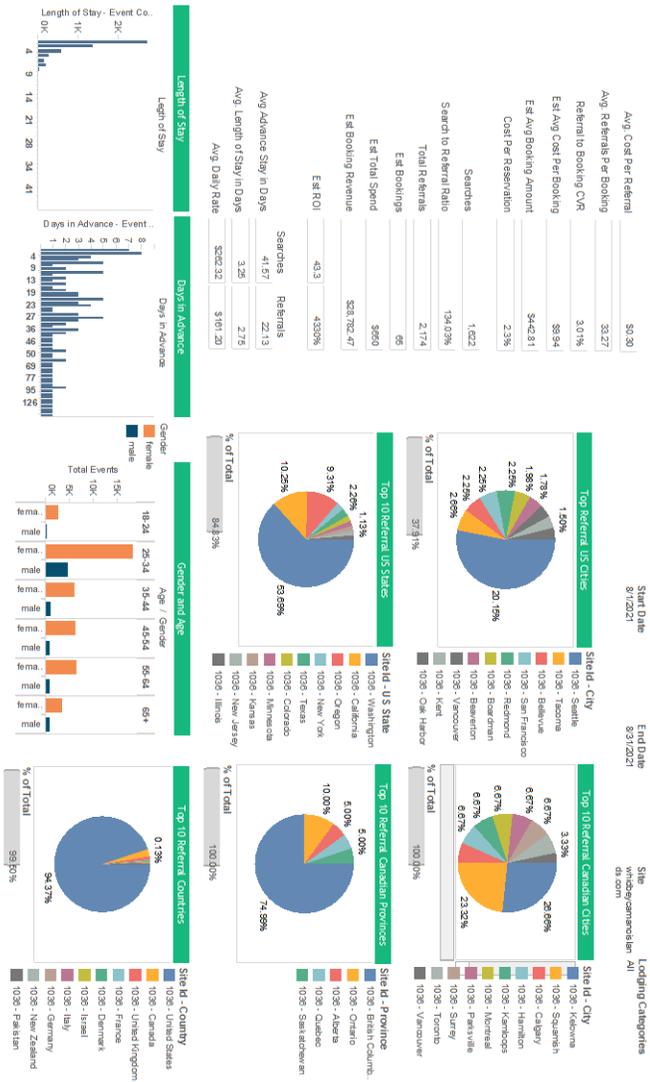
Since we run contests on a quarterly basis, people who use burner addresses to enter our contests won't normally delete them right away, but some might.

Also, we get email addresses from the Cascade Loop. If people both ask for information and give permission to share their email address with us, we get the email. Burner addresses might not still be working by the time they get to us.

All of this applies just to a segment of the iPhone audience. As other companies adopt the technology, this might eventually have an impact on the effectiveness of all email campaigns.

Performance Summary

A breakdown of search, referral and conversion data for the given time frame.



6. Chamber/Member Round Tables

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

7. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 12:35 pm.

Next regular meeting is November 4, 2021, via Zoom, from 11 am-1 pm. Meeting minutes recorded by Robyn Myers & Jessica McCready and reviewed for submission by Sherry Wyatt.