

**Meeting Minutes
Island County 2% Joint Advisory Board
Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism
November 4, 2021
Zoom, due to COVID-19**

Quorum: x=members present

Elected Town of Langley - Vacant	Com. Melanie Bacon x	Jackie Henderson x
Lodging Camano Island - Vacant	Gregg Lanza x	OH Lodging- Vacant
Dianne Binder x	S. Whidbey lodging- Vacant	Tom Felvey x
Janae Cameron x	Jessica McCready x	Chet Ross x
Vicki Graham x	Inge Morascini	Sharon Sappington, EDC x
Lynda Eccles x	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 11:00am by Vice Chair Chet Ross.

1. **Adoption of Agenda** – Vickie motioned and Lynda seconded accept the agenda. Approved with no objections.
2. **Approval of October 2021 Minutes** -Lynda motioned, Jackie seconded to approve the minutes. 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. Jets on Whidbey rack card has been reprinted if anyone needs more.
4. **Old Business: None**
5. **New Business:**
 - a. **Management Committee Report-** everything discussed is on the agenda.
 - b. **Budget:** Sherrye walked through the categories of the budget. Revenue report was discussed by Chet. Jackie moved to approve the 2022 budget in the amount \$557,500, Jessica seconded. No objections, thus the budget passed unanimously.

Budget Narrative:

EXPENSES

Professional Services

\$143,000

One independent contractor manages our organization, all the vendors, and the day-to-day operations, as well as the team of contractors in film, design, media relations and digital content development. This approach is a significant savings to our budget as we do not have any employees, so we do not pay for any benefits or the expense of a

traditional office. Contractors also pay their own health and business insurance, as well as any relevant taxes.

Our lead contractor serves as PR/Marketing Manager and Film Liaison: **Sherrye Wyatt Public Relations & Writing**. As lead contractor, she drives the big picture for the Joint 2% Advisory Board. All other contractors and vendors report to her. She is the primary go-to-person for Island County’s tourism and film production efforts and works with other organizations and industry leaders – locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Also included in this budget area is contractor **Laura Hilton** who contributes digital content development, including writing and photography, is assigned special research projects, is actively involved in film project management, and also fills a wide variety of roles including website/calendar updates, as needed.

Advertising/Printing

\$114,000

One of the largest investments in 2022 in this category will be printing of the new 25 Trails Guide to encourage stewardship by promoting lesser known trails. We are developing this with Island County and Sound Water Stewards. **Rosenkranz Productions** is the contractor who will oversee the final printing project.

A majority of the advertising planned for 2022 is intentionally being left undefined so that we may be flexible, and focus on the best target messages, audiences and delivery based on what we learn through our work with the **Transformational Travel Council (TTC)**. We do plan to continue our relationships and advertise with both the **Cascade Loop** and **Scenic WA**.

We contract with **Rosenkranz Productions**, for visual brand management and ongoing creative services in support of our brand and its narrative. Creative services include: campaign strategy, project management, graphic design and production of advertising and collateral pieces (such as the map brochure), illustration, creation of digital advertising, image editing, copy writing and print management.

We expect to continue to distribute our primary map asset through Certified Folder, until we run out of them. We are not planning to reprint the piece until after our work with TTC.

Marketing Services/Special Projects

\$174,300

This category is the most comprehensive as it includes all expenses related to travel, hosting, trade shows and other unique programs. We are keeping flexibility with respect to travel and trade shows due to the pandemic. This category also includes a nominal amount of budget to pay for some photocopying, postage, storage, and supplies.

Something new in 2022 will be to contract with the **Transformational Travel Council (TTC)** for a deeper dive into the destination with stakeholders to develop a new strategic plan, defining what we want Island County to look like with respect to tourism development. While most of the work is done virtually, there will be some expenses for a 5-day intensive in-person session in the islands that includes food and lodging for guest presenters and potential meeting room rental or other expenses.

Rosenkranz Productions also helps create special projects outside the scope of an ongoing creative services contract. One of 2022's special projects we anticipate is the need for a full rebranding of Whidbey & Camano Islands Tourism. This work will implement lessons coming out of the 2022 TTC strategic planning project. The rebrand will align us with new stewardship and visitor management messaging.

We have already invested in a program with **Washington State Ferries** and have been "on hold" as to when to launch our 12 month campaign on video screens and at the Mukilteo terminal and aboard the Mukilteo-Clinton ferries. We hope to do work with the Chambers for the onsite promotions when the time is right in 2022.

We'll continue working closely with our key partners including **Washington Tourism Alliance** and **Port of Seattle**, as the state rolls out its new brand. We are poised to take advantage of any "no or low" cost opportunities in 2022. We also anticipate there will be ways to apply for grant funding managed by both of these entities as COVID 19 economic recovery continues.

We'll contract with **Simple View** (previously named Jack Rabbit). This provides a way for our website visitors to go directly to Island County lodgings and book their stay. It has proven to bring in revenue to properties without any of the mark-up that others platforms such as Expedia or Booking.com charge. We are also purchasing a cloud-based digital management plan to store photos, videos and other important assets. This asset management platform creates a central location that team members will have access to. It will include licensing information about use of photos and video and will shorten our response time for media. It is another example of best practices put into action.

We'll contract with **Osborne Northwest Public Relations (ON PR)** and the most important goal of our comprehensive PR strategy is to influence consumer behavior and opinion through trusted third-party endorsements. We shape and share stories and messages that show *target* audiences how to interact with the community, find new things to do, see and experience on the islands, ultimately extending a visit or inspiring a new one.

Coming up in 2022, our plan will focus on messages of transformative travel, stewardship and off the beaten path destinations within the islands we know and love. The launch of the trail guide is anticipated to include collaborations with influencers that support of brand. Anticipated partnerships will garner fresh content for lesser-known experiences, places and trails while also showing and sharing the beauty and opportunity

with their targeted audiences, ranging from local and regional and national and international in reach.

Messaging throughout the year will adapt to research and development gained in focus groups with local community in addition to current travel trends and precautions. As travel conditions and consumer sentiment continue to evolve, ON PR will mine stories for small businesses, adaptations and hospitality drive stories that create the right kind of awareness for the time.

Tactics like the following will be implemented on an ongoing basis to reflect the stories, goals and message of the organization:

- **Research, Development and Strategy Evolution.** Programs, tactics and messaging will support an emphasis on stewardship, finding the path less traveled. We develop story sheets and pitches on a seasonal basis, in addition to direct pitch development as news and opportunities dictate. All messaging will align with goals of transformative travel, stewardship and community focus.
- **Proactive Media Outreach and Engagement.** Efforts with influencers and traditional media continue to be implemented to ensure seamless publicity and relationship management. This includes connection through story pitching, media visits and Instagram engagement in real time. We manage the community (liking, commenting, messaging) with influencers and island community members, businesses to ensure we're interacting in real time.
- **Determine Travel Programming, Partnerships and Events** that place Camano and Whidbey's offerings in the pages, trade shows or feeds of key audiences are executed and marketed.

Communication, Tracking and Reporting play a key role in our ongoing campaign.

We understand the importance of ROI and the immediacy of news. We send client coverage as soon as it is received and compile in a monthly report using three key performance indicators to analyze results and track awareness efforts:

- **Impressions** address the reach of earned media by way of circulation for print media, unique monthly visits for online media and viewer/listenership for broadcast media.
- **Domain Authority**, an average rate that defines the collective influence of earned media placements and the likelihood of google visibility. The greater the domain authority score, the greater the chance of earned content appearing higher in a google search.
- **Social Shares** provide a snapshot of engagement with content we've earned, including how many times links were shared across link-driven sharing platforms including Facebook and Twitter.

Research

\$26,000

Dean Runyon: For the third consecutive year we have contracted with Dean Runyon to

create a comprehensive and customized report of economic impact tourism has on Island County. This report has been broken down to show the incorporated areas and both islands.

Datafy (formally called See Source): We are entering our second year with this new service. Through a negotiated partnership with the Washington Tourism Alliance we are able to subscribe to a new service at 50% discount. This research is invaluable as it allows us to know more about our visitors and develop news ways to reach them.

AirDNA: We are entering our second year with this new subscription service that provide short term vacation rental data monitoring Air BNB and VRBO within Island County.

Memberships \$4,000

At a minimum, we'll continue our memberships in the **International Food Wine and Travel Writers Association, Washington State Destination Marketing Organization, National Scenic Byways, North American Travel Journalists Association, DMA West and Washington Tourism Alliance.** We may learn of new collaborations we should join as we go through our outreach process with the TTC.

Digital **\$95,000**

ComputerPIX continues to serve as the key contractor for some of the most critical work of the tourism program, our digital presence. With our successful and comprehensive website now reaching over 20,000 visitors a month, keeping things relevant and fresh will continue to be key. A monthly e-newsletter and quarterly contests are part of that effort, not to mention social media work, plus content creation of video, stories and photography.

With a potential rebranding in sight, much of the look and feel of our digital marketing will need to be reworked in 2022-2023. Even without a full rebranding, the new input from stakeholder leaders will doubtless result in the need for new website content.

This year will offer a fresh emphasis in stewardship and regenerative travel opportunities. One known area for additional content will be in our “things to do outdoors.” There will be an expanded trails section that will complement the guide and include maps and videos. Well-known destinations and trails will take a back seat as we include more lesser-known alternatives. A new emphasis on transformational travel will be woven into our storytelling, as well as efforts to embrace the new Washington state tourism brand to be unveiled shortly to the entire community.

Included in this budget area are a number of important digital subscriptions, platforms and tools including **MailChimp, Facebook Ads, Hoot Suite, Buffer, Co-Schedule, Word Press Plugins, Trello, Cloudways Hosting.** Periodically we also contract with an exceptionally talented IT expert **Michael Bourne.**

Approved Budget 2022**Island County 2% Joint Advisory Board**

	2022	2021	Difference
<u>PROFESSIONAL SERVICES</u>			
Marketing Coordinator - Wyatt	\$108,000	\$90,000	\$18,000
PR Support/Fulfillment/Admin - Hilton	\$35,000	\$17,600	\$17,400
Subtotal Professional Services	\$143,000	\$107,600	\$35,400
<u>ADVERTISING</u>			
Print/Radio/TV/Digital	\$43,000	\$43,000	\$0
Printing/Trails Guide	\$50,000	\$3,000	\$47,000*
Rosenkranz Productions Graphic Design	\$21,600	\$21,600	\$0
Subtotal Advertising	\$114,600	\$67,600	\$47,000
<u>MARKETING/PR/SPECIAL PROJECTS</u>			
PR Hosting/Sweepstakes/Shows/Travel	\$38,300	\$30,000	\$8,300*
Osborne NW Media Relations/Earned & Social Media	\$54,000	\$36,000	\$18,000
Fulfillment Postage/Supplies/Storage	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$0
Strategic Planning – Transformational Travel Council	\$30,000	\$0	\$30,000*
Special Projects/R & D	\$30,000	\$13,200	\$16,800*
Ferry Marketing & Distribution	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$0
Simpleview - Lodging Platform & Content Storage	\$12,000	\$9,000	\$3,000
Subtotal Marketing & Public Relations	\$174,300	\$98,200	\$76,100
<u>RESEARCH</u>			
Research – See Source (new name Datafy)	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$0
Research – Dean Runyon (3 rd yr of 3 yr contract)	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$0
Research – AirDNA	\$9,600	\$9,600	\$0
Subtotal Research	\$26,600	\$26,600	\$0
<u>MEMBERSHIPS</u>			
Washington Tourism Alliance (WTA)	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0
International Food, Wine, Travel Writers Association (IFWTWA)	\$500	\$500	\$0
North American Travel Journalists Association (NATJA)	\$500	\$500	\$0
Destination Marketing Association (DMA West)	\$500	\$500	\$0
National Scenic Byways	\$500	\$500	\$0
Washington State Destination Marketing Association	\$500	\$500	\$0

	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0
Subtotal Memberships	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$0

DIGITAL

Social Media/Ads/Platforms/Mail Chimp/Hoot Suite/Buffer/Co-Schedule Michael Bourne/WordPress Plugins/Trello/Cloudways Hosting	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$0
ComputerPIX – Videos/Website Management/Copy Content/Listings Photography/Blog Posts (ranges from \$50,000-\$70,000 annually)	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$0
Subtotal Digital	\$95,000	\$95,000	\$0

GRAND TOTAL **\$557,500** **\$399,000** **\$158,500**

*New stewardship & transformational travel related expenses: \$93,800
2020 budget was \$422,000

c. PR Media Report:

The full monthly tourism report is presented here:

SHERRYE WYATT PUBLIC RELATIONS & WRITING

The global maritime staffing issues have been hitting close to home. Rep. Andrew Barkis, the Ranking Member on the House Transportation Committee, is having the Joint Transportation Committee look into the current ferries matters specifically. His statement is here: <https://andrewbarkis.housepublicans.wa.gov/2021/10/07/house-republican-transportation-lead-rep-andrew-barkis-reacts-to-the-staff-shortage-aboard-washington-state-ferries/> A virtual town hall meeting of the 10th legislative district to discuss the ferry challenges is planned for Nov. 2 at 6 p.m., register here: https://leg-wa.gov.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_F7GEgVcoT1S8EbJnEC4ePQ

Because of our relationship with T4Media and partnership with Washington State Ferries, we were offered complimentary space on the busiest pages of the WSDOT website, the schedules. It is driving traffic to our Island Getaway contest pages. Entries to the Clinton package end on Oct. 31. The next package will feature the Coupeville area.

A new global music video just went live this week, filmed on Whidbey Island. The song is in the Tamil language and tells the story of a boy singing about the girl he loves (rough translation): [Amal Manohar - Kadhaliye \[Official Video\] - YouTube](#)

Home for the Holidays graphic design assets are being repurposed this year as they were well received in 2020 and the same messaging holds true as the pandemic continues in 2021.

Sound Water Stewards and Island County have approved the list of 25 trails. “Ground truthing” is now underway by our team, utilizing a template in order to gather the same data about each trail.

Whidbey and Camano Islands were chosen by the **Port of Seattle and Washington Tourism Alliance** to participate in virtual “FAM” tours for the UK, Australia and New Zealand travel operators. Live virtual programs also include pre-recorded segments, some with chefs preparing recipes with local products. We also provided 50 custom pocket-sized journals for the participants.

OSBORNE NORTHWEST PUBLIC RELATIONS

Monthly Overview

Following a busy month of visits in early fall, this month we worked with media to develop stories to fruition while also planning for the launch of the impending trail guide. As expected, and intentionally, our on-island visits were brought to a minimum as we realign our plans, messages and strategies for the coming months. We identified a timeline and launch strategy to successfully position and launch the new resource. Early planning for 2022 was also executed this month. We will be working with identified influencers to bolster awareness and content for the guide, with anticipated tours, itinerary development and photo shoots planned for November and early December.

Project Management

- Managed media follow up for high volume of September visits including confirmed or pending coverage in KING 5, USA Today, Tiny Beans (formerly Red Tricycle) and others.
- Managed ongoing media relations to ensure placement in fall travel roundups and travel pieces, highlighting the Haunting of Coupeville and other fall harvest themes.
- Participated in team planning calls and communication regarding the new Trail Guide to understand the project timeline and develop a PR plan to match it.

Influencer/Media Visits

- Confirmed interest in collaboration with the following influencers to help develop photography and recommended itinerary content surrounding the launch of the guide:
 - [@SuziPratt](#); a Seattle-based photographer specializing in food, nature and outdoors. She also has a significant travel following, a young baby who will appear in the family-focused trail content. Visit Date: Early December, TBD.
 - [@FeatherandSkull](#); a Camano-island based influencer with a significant audience who covers lifestyle topics, and often posts her island life content. She will supply photos and local recommendations for top places to check out surrounding the chosen trails. She is local, so a formal visit won't occur, we will work on her content weather permitting to be due end of November.

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 2,005 on September 29 to 2,033 on October 28; a growth rate of 1.39% (note: this is on average lower than typical 3-4% growth rate, we attribute this to less media interactions and influencer collaborations this month as we plan for future partnerships).

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.
 - **Corrine Whiting, a Seattle based writer who contributes to publications such as *USA Today’s 10 Best*, *KOMO 4’s Seattle Refined*, *1889 Magazine* and more**, will be highlighting Captain Whidbey Inn for an upcoming article in *1889 Magazine* in a story highlighting romantic getaways for the December/January issue.

Press Highlights include 15 pieces of coverage with an estimated 938 million impressions. To view the coverage in full go [here](#).

COMPUTERPIX

Website 1100 a Day

I was thinking, “what’s an easy way to describe the traffic to the tourism website.” Strip away all of the small stuff and come up with an easy number. So, this is it...

On average, more than 1100 people visit the Whidbey and Camano Islands website each day.

Where did that figure come from? Google Analytics reported 358,762 users going to the website between October 29, 2020, and October 28, 2021. As noted in earlier reports, Google Analytics misses a lot of users who have advertising-blocking and other privacy software on their computers and smart phones.

According to one recent study, by data scientists, Google Analytics misses 15% to 25% of all traffic. You can read more about the study here...

<https://towardsdatascience.com/how-much-data-is-missing-from-your-google-analytics-dashboard-20506b26e6d>

So, 358,762 divided by 365 is 982. 15% (the lowest estimate in the study) of 982 is 147. Add the two together and you 1,129. If you use 25%, you get 1,227.

Website Rankings Compared

On the next page is a chart I haven't shared in a while. Alexa.com is a subsidiary of Amazon and it ranks the world's websites. One can then plot charts to compare various sites. This chart is for some of the sites around here.

Our site is the light pink line. You see that our site and the site for the San Juans are fairly evenly ranked. The sites for both Bellingham and Seattle North Country (Snohomish County) have improved quite a bit in the last few months. Apparently renewed efforts are paying off.



It's All About Practical Magic

Using Google Analytics, you can learn what phrases people type (or say) into Google that gets them to our website. The chart below shows the top phrases for October 1 – 28. “Whidbey Island” is nearly always #1 and Deception Pass is #2 or #3. This chart shows that various phrases relating to the movie “Practical Magic” took 6 of the top 10 places and pushed Deception Pass off the top 10 altogether. Practical Magic-related searched took 13 of the top 25 places.

Search Query	Clicks ¹	Impressions ²	CTR ³	Average Position ⁴
whidbey island	1,507	36,124	4.17%	2.3
where was practical magic filmed	811	5,473	14.82%	2.3
practical magic	327	156,052	0.21%	3.9
practical magic film location	220	781	28.17%	1
fort casey haunted house 2021	215	361	59.56%	1
coupeville wa	209	3,522	5.93%	2.6
practical magic house location	206	803	25.65%	1.7
where is practical magic set	196	948	20.68%	1

where does practical magic take place	192	880	21.82%	1
coupeville	166	2,877	5.77%	2.6

¹The number of times someone clicked on the link that Google showed in search results

²The number of times someone saw our link-roughly the same thing as a banner ad or billboard

³The percentage of people who saw the link and clicked on it

⁴Google personalizes search results, so sometimes our link might be first, sometimes lower. This is an average of where our link appears.

Practical Magic is searched for year-round. For example, “where was practical magic filmed” was the #2 search phrase in August and #6 in July.

Video

Just one video project to report on this month, a two-minute-long video hosted, written, and narrated by Sherrye. The video is for the upcoming virtual Seattle tour for Australian travel writers, but can be easily re-edited for other projects, as well.

Book Direct Monthly Report

On the next page is the September report from Book Direct. There were 1,217 referrals to lodging, producing an estimated 36 bookings and an estimated revenue of \$18,036. So far in October, there’s been 722 referrals. The winter slump has set in.

d. Chamber/Member Round Tables

Those committee members present on the call briefed the committee with current events and concerns in their communities. Camano Island shared regarding their shop local campaign to encourage shopping early the holidays. Glassquest preparations are moving forward. Vicki reported Veteran’s Day event at Oak Harbor High School and a reverse Christmas Parade on December 4 with Santa’s welcome. Coupeville had a successful Haunting of Coupeville and Practical Magic is still very popular. Christmas parade and boat parade will happen on December 4 along with Santa. Clinton has some new businesses opening soon, which include dining spaces. Janae asked that any questions about chamber operations be specifically directed to her. They are working to connect with business owners that may need more support during this time.

e. Contracts were added to the agenda by Chet Ross

- i. Robyn moved and Jackie seconded to approve Sherrye Wyatt Public Relations & Writing contract addendum at \$108,000 for 2022. The motion approved with no objections.
- ii. Lynda moved and Jessica seconded to approve Computer Pix LLC, Jack Penland, contract addendum at \$85 per hour for 2022. The motion approved with no objections.
- iii. Lynda moved and Vicki seconded to approve the contract renewal for Osborne Northwest Public Relations, Erin Osborne, at \$54,000 for 2022. The motion approved with no objections.

- iv. Vicki moved and Jackie seconded to approve Rosenkranz Products Inc, Scott Rosenkranz, extend contract addendum at \$21,600 for 2022. The motion adopted unanimously.

6. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 12:28 pm.

Next regular meeting is December 2, 2021, via Zoom, from 11 am-1 pm. Meeting minutes recorded by Robyn Myers and reviewed for submission by Sherrye Wyatt.