

Meeting Minutes
Island County 2% Joint Advisory Board
Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism
September 9, 2021
Zoom, due to COVID-19

Quorum: x=members present

| | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Elected Town of Langley - Vacant | Com. Melanie Bacon | Jackie Henderson x |
| Debra Bell x | Gregg Lanza x | OH Lodging- Vacant |
| Dianne Binder | 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 | Jim Woessner |

In addition to the above members, guests also in attendance were Selene Muldowney-Stratton, Marketing & Communications Officer Island Transit; Jack Penland, Computer Pix LLC, and Sherrye Wyatt, Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism PR & Marketing Manager and Film Liaison, and Laura Hilton, Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism special projects.

Meeting called to order at 11:24 am by Chet Ross.

1. **Adoption of the Agenda:** Chet made an addition to the agenda to add approval of Rosencrantz production trail guide for \$17,500. Lynda Eccles motioned, and Deb Bell seconded to approve the agenda as presented. Motion approved unanimously.
2. **Minutes** from the August 5, 2021 meeting were presented via email. No changes were made to the minutes. Lynda Eccles motioned, and Vicki Graham seconded to approve the minutes from August 5, 2021 as presented. Motion approved unanimously.
3. Treasurer's report was not presented. The monthly invoices were approved at the Management Committee Meeting. A draft budget for 2022 will be presented in October with final approval in November.
4. **Old Business:**
 - a. Trail Guide update - Sound Water Stewards is on board as a collaborating partner. Narrowing down to 25 trails and extending the timeline through the end of the year. Jack Penland described a 2 min. trailer video for trails.
 - b. Approve payment to Rosencrantz Productions trail guide at \$17,500. Jessica McCready motioned, and Deb Bell seconded to approve \$17,500 payment to Rosencrantz Productions. Motion approved unanimously.
5. **New Business:**

a. Management Committee Report - all information from the management committee report is on the agenda.

b. Destination Development: Sherrye is going through a 14 week program that is providing a global understanding of the destination and visitor relationship. She is very delighted with the new information and the relationships she is learning through this process. It will be very helpful as Whidbey and Camano Islands moves into the full TTC destination development process. She shared this morning's group discussion where participants each answered the following questions on the

Transformational Travel Council HEART activity:

Humble:

How can you implement a humble persona into your destination? How can you approach your visitors from a humble perspective?

Engaged:

What are the values of your destination? Know your WHY. How can you discover and stay in touch with what motivates your visitors?

Awake:

How can you ensure that you are constantly connecting (pre-trip, during the visit, and after they leave)?

Resilient:

How can you look for the learning from failures? How do you frame challenges when things go wrong with your visitors -in the moment?

Thankful:

What are you grateful for? How can you celebrate small successes to motivate you moving forward?

c. Short Term Rental Update - Jack Penland put together a report shared last month. AirDNA is what is used for data on rentals. The information is organized data in zip codes and provides data such as pricing, days available and annual income. Jack is looking at data in month vs. month for analysis. Rates are at or near all time highs and rentals are full and booked early. See the short term rental report emailed for more detail.

d. PR Media Report:

The full monthly tourism report is presented here:

TOURISM REPORT

SEPTEMBER 7, 2021

SHERRYE WYATT PUBLIC RELATIONS & WRITING

Sherrye is participating in the **Transformational Travel Council (TTC)** recognized transformer program. The **Transformation Design Program** is a 14-week cooperatively created educational course and action tank for professionals looking to integrate and enhance their craft and their businesses with the framework of transformation design.

Participants in her class are from South Africa, Germany, Dubai, Los Angeles, Mexico, etc., pretty much every corner of the world. The program offers an additional focus on networking and collaborating with industry leaders. She is learning practical tools and methods for expanding and deepening traveler connection, meaning, and purpose which leads to increased engagement, referrals, loyalty.

The coursework is an ideal way to ramp up for next year's plan to take the Island County community with **TTC** through a tourism redevelopment discussion in order to reimagine tourism with a new focus on stewardship and sustainability and a multi-year strategic plan (est. cost \$30,000). Much of the work can be done virtually until the pandemic is behind us, as some of the mentors are from all over the world and bring a very high level, global perspective. www.transformational.travel

Sherrye will also apply for the **Washington Tourism Alliance's (WTA)** offer to provide a thought-provoking series of in-person workshops for tourism development. One Washington rural destination will be selected to go through the program at no cost, once the pandemic is over (it is NOT a virtual program, all meetings are held in person). It is not something we can pay to participate in, we have to be chosen. However, if we are chosen, there are packages we can pay extra in order to enhance the experience and take a deeper dive into metrics. Stewardship and sustainability will be well-received by the local community. Here are a few stories related to this topic:

Condé Nast Traveler: Iceland [How Iceland Is Rethinking Tourism for the Long Haul | Condé Nast Traveler \(cntraveler.com\)](https://www.cntraveler.com/story/how-iceland-is-rethinking-tourism-for-the-long-haul)

Seattle Times: Orcas Island https://www.seattletimes.com/life/food-drink/amid-a-crazy-busy-tourist-season-on-orcas-island-restaurants-struggle-with-increased-demand-compounded-by-lack-of-housing-and-a-worker-shortage/?utm_source=email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=article_inset_1.1

South Whidbey Record: Opinion <https://www.southwhidbeyrecord.com/opinion/in-our-opinion-with-tourism-at-all-time-high-change-in-investment-needed/>

WTA is holding a webinar on **Tread Map** in the near future and have recommended that we plan to budget \$30,000 if we choose to participate in the cost-shared trails application. It can be split between two years (\$15,000 in 2022 and \$15,000 in 2023). The app is designed to direct people away from busy trails and keep users posted in real-time. It ties in well with our focus on sustainability and stewardship. The **WTA** state tourism conference planned for October 2021 has been moved to Spring 2022 due to the pandemic. Sherrye is also working with **WTA** on a webinar-style module for overseas travel buyers, it is a virtual program where she and Mike Moe take viewers on a tour of the islands with videos and slides.

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 doing a video/audio interview with **Big Blend Radio** on September 10. **The Jet Set** travel show will be filming on Camano Island September 12-13 and Whidbey Island September 13-17. Then they move on to the San Juan Islands and Seattle before departing on September 21. Sherrye is working with the **Port of Seattle** on a virtual “FAM” tour of Whidbey and Camano Islands through video and slides which will be shared with UK and Australian travel buyers. Sherrye is working with author or a maritime heritage guide, Erich Ebel from **Washington Our Home**.

The **TBEX conference** (Travel Blog Exchange – North America 2021) in the Tri-Cities, WA that we are hosting a post-conference FAM trip on Camano Island has now been postponed from October 2021 to April 2022 due to the pandemic.

OSBORNE NORTHWEST PUBLIC RELATIONS

Monthly Overview

As anticipated, the Delta variant has caused quick changes in the tourism industry. We are monitoring our travel writer and media engagements closely with plans to adapt as changes continue, and high levels of hyper local, drive market and pacific northwest road trippers are anticipated this fall. We have rescheduled one out of state travel writer to date, with several vaccinated travel writers from across the country still on the calendar. This month involved planning and executing a high volume of late summer media visits, and planning for fall and beyond.

Momentum created during our shop local campaign continues to bear fruit with press that supports island businesses. We have KING 5 Evening confirmed to shoot a piece on the Arrows Aim Mobile Greenhouse and Whidbey Island Bagels, this month with each story slated to air in September. The Seattle Maven, an influencer we hosted this month offered endorsements for travel, as well as a full series of stories dedicated to “shop small” with highlights recommending Chocolate Flower Farm, Aqua Gifts, Ciao and more.

Project Management

Maintained communication with the team regarding COVID changes and news; shared updated news and stories for August visits which included:

- **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. Ann had an incredible visit and shared her highlights throughout her social channels, including Twitter (21k followers) and Instagram (1.4k followers).

- **August 26, Anne Erickson, KING 5 Evening;** will visit Arrows Aim Greenhouse to shoot a segment on the mobile greenhouse that appears at Whidbey Farmers Markets and pop-up on the island.
- Tracked and booked accommodations, 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 1,892 on July 29 to 1941 on August 26, an increase of 2.6%;

Media Visits/Pending Press

- **Jean Chen-Smith, Sept. 1-10, USA Today Travel Syndicate, Travel + Leisure;** Jean is 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 is visiting Camano, Sept. 1-4; Coupeville Sept. 4-7 and Langley, Sept. 7-10.
- **Natalie Campagno, 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;* we hope to bring her to the islands in Fall 2021 to research story ideas.**
- **Sara Franklin, RESCHEDULED/Postponed for Spring 2022, 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.

Press Highlights include 20 pieces of coverage with an estimated 22.1 million impressions. To view the coverage in full [go here](#) .

COMPUTERPIX

Fresh Content

Video and Blog Post | Two Minute Trailer: Beach View Farm Trail

We're trying a new video series where we take two minutes to show the highlights of some of the county's lesser-known trails.

<https://whidbeycamanoislands.com/two-minute-trailer-beach-view-farm-trail/>

Blog Post | Visiting Farms on Whidbey and Camano Islands

This is a round-up of major agri-culinary experiences.

<https://whidbeycamanoislands.com/visiting-farms-on-whidbey-and-camano-islands/>

Video and Blog Post | A Chef Looks at Whidbey and Camano Island’s Foodie Future

Ciao owner Mark Laska sees us becoming a unique food destination.

<https://whidbeycamanoislands.com/a-chef-looks-at-whidbey-and-camano-islands-food-future/>

(Video produced earlier, blog post is new)

Video | Tour for Trade Shows

Mostly aerials and time-lapses, this will be periodically updated.

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/593392838>

Newsletter

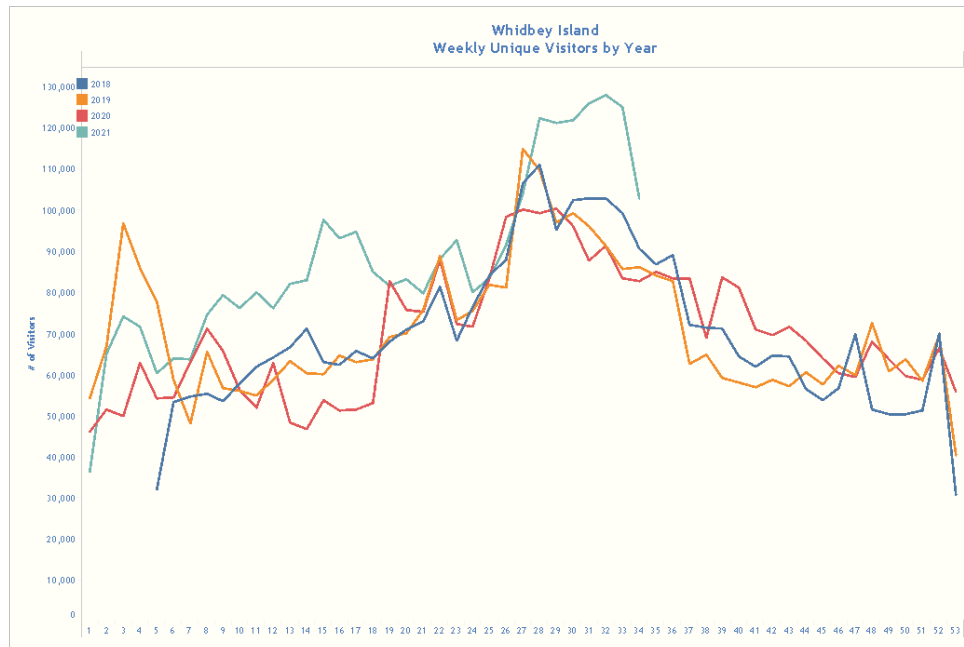
The newsletter had an agri-culinary theme to it. It was also sent out a second time *just* to those who didn’t open the first email. Between the two, 6451 people opened the newsletter.

<https://us12.campaign-archive.com/?u=11380ced8373e34392577e79b&id=4dabae1ec>

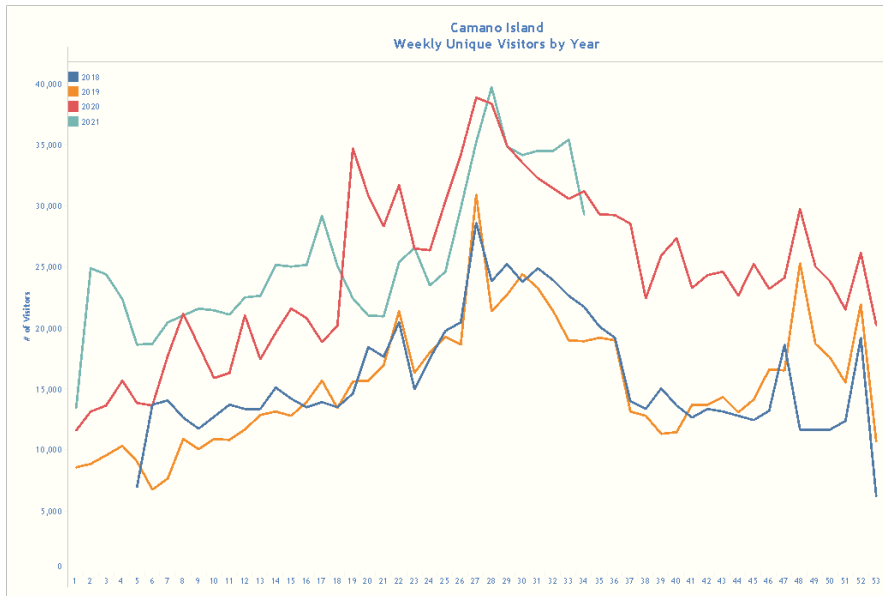
| Topics | Clicks | Unique Clicks |
|---------------------------|--------|---------------|
| Contest | 676 | 552 |
| Visiting Farms | 514 | 398 |
| Farm Beach Trail | 144 | 117 |
| Oak Harbor Music Festival | 129 | 107 |
| Foodie Future | 118 | 92 |
| Lodging | 97 | 81 |

Data

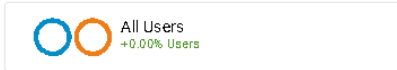
The next two charts show weekly unique visitors to Whidbey Island and Camano Island. It is measuring all visitors traveling more than 15 miles from home. 2021 is well ahead of previous years but trending down more quickly than did previous years. We’ll need to watch how that plays out over the next few weeks.



Next is a look at traffic to the website as measured by Google Analytics. You are looking at 2021 compared with the more “normal” 2019. The number of unique users is up 40% from 2019.



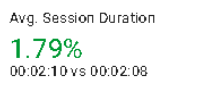
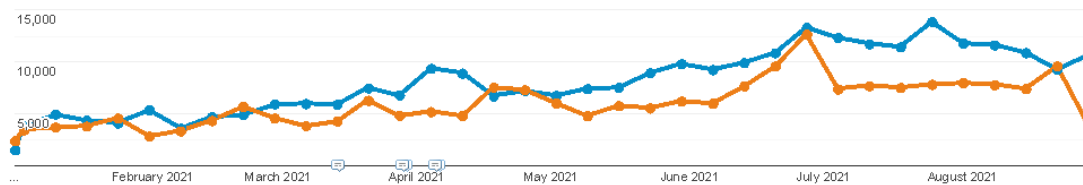
Audience Overview



Jan 1, 2021 - Sep 4, 2021
Compare to: Jan 1, 2019 - Sep 4, 2019

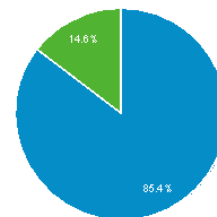
Overview

Jan 1, 2021 - Sep 4, 2021: ● Users
Jan 1, 2019 - Sep 4, 2019: ● Users

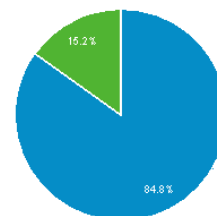


■ New Visitor ■ Returning Visitor

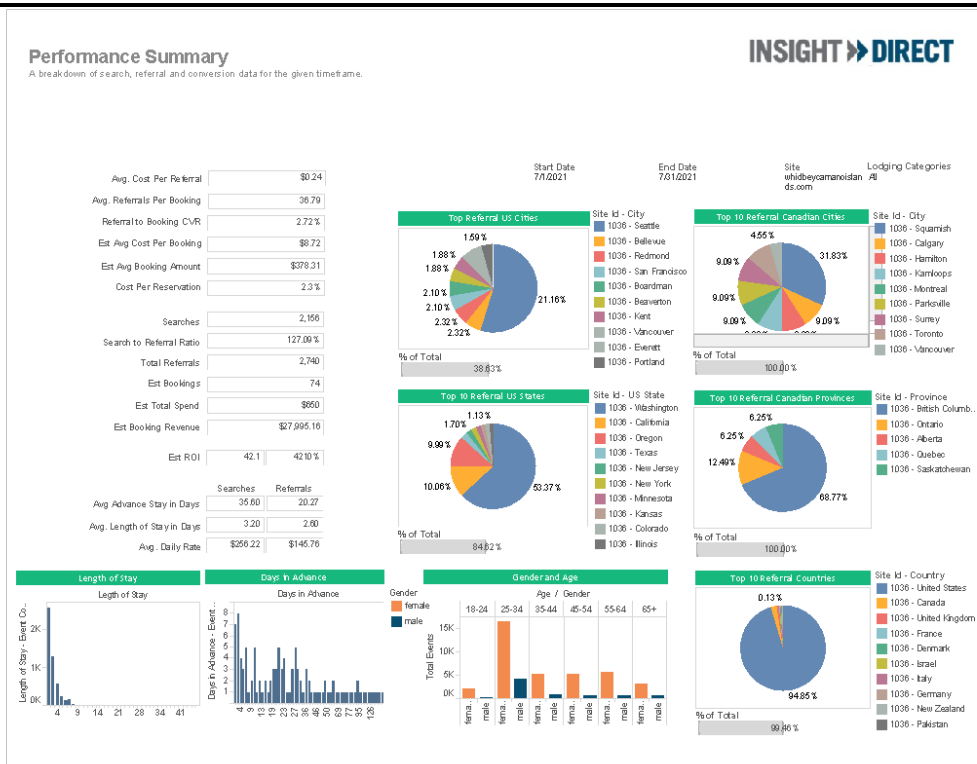
Jan 1, 2021 - Sep 4, 2021



Jan 1, 2019 - Sep 4, 2019



The last page shows the July referrals from the website to lodging booking pages or websites. I haven't received the August report, yet, but I do know there were 2172 referrals in August.



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 12:43 pm.

Next regular meeting is October 7, 2021, via Zoom, from 11 am-1 pm. Meeting minutes recorded by Jessica McCready and reviewed for submission by Sherrye Wyatt.