

**Meeting Minutes
 Island County 2% Joint Advisory Board
 Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism
 February 10, 2022
 Zoom, due to COVID-19**

Quorum: x=members present

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|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Mayor Scott Chaplin x | Com. Melanie Bacon x | Jackie Henderson x |
| Alanah Johansen x | Gregg Lanza x | OH Lodging- Vacant |
| Dianne Binder x | Max Lindsay-Thorsen x | Tom Felvey x |
| Janae Cameron | Jessica McCready x | Chet Ross x |
| Vicki Graham | Inge Morascini | Sharon Sappington, EDC |
| Lynda Eccles x | Robyn Myers x | Jim Woessner x |
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In addition to the above members, guests also in attendance were:
 Christina Swan, Clinton Chamber of Commerce, South Whidbey Lodging Manager; Amy Bush, Camano Arts Association; Christina Swan, Clinton Chamber of Commerce Secretary. Jake Hauptert, Transformational Travel Council. Sherrye Wyatt, Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism PR & Marketing Manager and Film Liaison; Laura Hilton, Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism special projects.

Meeting called to order at 11:13 am by Vice Chair Chet Ross.

1. **Adoption of Agenda** – Jackie motioned, and Max seconded to accept the agenda. Approved with no objections.
2. **Approval of January 2022 Minutes** -Jessica motioned, Gregg 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.
4. **Old Business: None**
5. **New Business:**
 - a. **Management Committee Report**- everything discussed is on the agenda.
 - b. **Transformative Destinations Presentation** by Jake Hauptert, President and Founder of Transformational Travel Council. Jake walked the committee through the process for training and implementing the program.
 - c. **PR Media Report:**
 The full monthly tourism report is presented here:

**TOURISM REPORT
 FEBRUARY 1, 2022
SHERRYE WYATT PR & WRITING**

State of Washington Tourism (used to be named Washington Tourism Alliance) is the new brand being rolled out now. Here is a link to a presentation. We should be receiving more assets and recommendations on how to integrate into our own branding soon. We also expect to hear news on funding that is to be awarded through the state. Here is a press release about the new brand: <https://industry.stateofwatourism.com/washington-tourism-alliance-unveils-new-brand/> and here is the new visitor facing website (used to be ExperienceWA.com) <https://www.stateofwatourism.com/>

We're seriously looking to see if Island County should join the **TREAD Map App**. Several of us attended a webinar held by State of Washington Tourism on the new TREAD Map App and are now seriously considering Island County participating, but I believe we all want to be sure we have the capacity to commit the time needed to launch and manage our role. We are going get our small trail guide out first and then move through the strategic planning. If TREAD is a logical outcome of the strategic planning we will proceed. Go [here](#) for a recording of the presentation. Click [here](#) for an overview of TREAD Map App and what is needed to bring TREAD to our county. For more information, you can visit the [Tread website](#) or click [here](#) for the video and presentation of the app.

Washington Filmworks is supporting legislation moving rapidly through the House and Senate to increase the incentive fund from \$3.5 million to \$20 million. Last week SB 5760 was voted out of committee and has been referred to Ways and Means. On Friday, January 28, HB 1914 was also passed out of the Committee on Community and Economic Development. The bill is now known as Substitute House Bill (SHB) 1914. Next hearing is Thursday, Feb 3. You may sign in to PRO [here](#). You may [circulate this ACTION ALERT](#) and let everyone know that the deadline to sign on to the Business Letter of Support is Wednesday, February 9th.

Sherrye has now testified before Senate and House committees to share the positive impact of film on rural communities and tourism. One example of film's recent economic contribution is the movie Midday Black, Midnight Blue filmed in Washington state. During a 21-day film shoot, over \$48,000 spent in hotels in Coupeville, Oak Harbor, & Langley - with 340+ Room nights. They utilized 67 different businesses on the island and 18.5% of their total Washington spend was in Island County. To learn more visit <https://keepfilminwa.com/>.

We are considering applying this year for the **Port of Seattle** tourism grant. We have sat out of the application process 4 years. <https://www.portseattle.org/programs/tourism-marketing-support-program>

Sherrye presented an update to the Island County Commissioners on January 19 and updated them on the strategy for dealing with tourism related opportunities and issues head on in a community-based manner by working with the **Transformational Travel Council**. The first leadership team meeting in February. A longer report is coming to the committee and a place on the WhidbeyCamanos.com website will be developed to provide progress reports.

OSBORNE NORTHWEST PUBLIC RELATIONS

Monthly Overview

We kicked off the year of 2022 with a focus on Transformational Travel planning, as well as interim plans for destination management in the first half of 2022. As the Transformational Travel program rolls out in Island County throughout the first half of 2022, our destination marketing team will maintain involvement in its development yet also stay focused on maintaining a strategic focus on brand management.

With the ultimate task of maintaining hotel occupancy, we want to stay within the conversation of Pacific Northwest getaways as it relates to responsible travel. Themes like conservation and watchable wildlife, farm to table connections, arts and culture, exceptional alternative experiences, and support of small businesses will be among the key themes of our messaging. We will share these stories and messages within a limited number of channels, while also prioritizing transparency and communication with the community as the Transformational Travel and strategic plan inches closer.

Project Management

- Developed communications strategy for launch of the Transformational Travel plan, as well as and interim PR planning for the first half of the year.
- Developed pitching materials with relevant and timeline storylines, upcoming events and winter travel news.
- Managed ongoing media relations to ensure placement in winter travel roundups and travel pieces for early 2022 and spring/summer placements.
- 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.
- Managed an Instagram-based giveaway in partnership with Visit Langley to share and promote Mystery Weekend, resulted in strong engagement with both locals and tourists.

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 2,115 on December 23 to 2,150 on January 27; a growth rate of 1.65%.

Media Visits

- **Molly Amber, February, 25-27;** contributor to Seattleite and influencer @MollyWandersandEats and @MollyWandersTheWorld; will visit for Mystery Weekend, plans to share event details in advance on her channels.
- **Suzanne Stavert, April 23-25;** influencer at Empty Nest Travel blog and @SuzanneStavert, is visiting for a girls weekend; this is a non-hosted trip, but we may collaborate on visits and content to promote via her channels.

- **Megan Hill, May 15-16;** contributing writer for Eater Seattle and Food + Travel Magazine, is planning to visit Captain Whidbey Inn for future consideration in her outlets. Visit date tentatively set for
- **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.

Pending Press

- **Mary Rose Denton, writer for Welcome Snohomish County,** will include dining options in Langley and Coupeville in an upcoming issue slated for spring/summer of 2022
- **Meetings News NW,** will include the islands in a roundup of destinations in an upcoming issue
- **Northwest Travel & Life Magazine** is planning to feature Langley in an upcoming article featuring coastal spa retreats, slated for March/April.
- **Stephen Fennell;** managing editor for SunCruiser West Coast, coordinated information and updates for boaters and photos of Oak Harbor Marina for an upcoming destination boating piece in the annual guide (publishing in early 2022).
- **Jean Chen Smith, writer for the USA Today Syndicate which publishes to Yahoo News, MSN, and a number of daily papers throughout the country,** is planning to feature Ciao Food & Wine’s meal kits for an upcoming Valentine’s Day Gift Guide. Publishing date TBD.
- **1889 Magazine,** will be featuring Blooms Winery’s flowers and 5511 Bistro in an upcoming issue slated for April/May

Press Highlights include 7 pieces of coverage with an estimated 9.44 million impressions. To view the coverage in [full go here.](#)

COMPUTERPIX

ROI

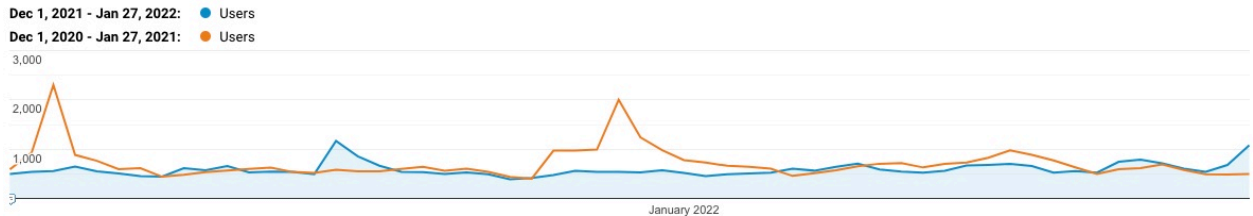
Based on a study done by DMA West, the Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism website had an economic impact in Island County of \$13.36 million in 2021. A graphic is at the end of this report.

The 2021 overview of Book Direct shows an ROI of 25.8 or 2580% return on what tourism spent. A chart is at the end of this report.

A Downturn/We're Not Alone

This winter has been quieter than usual, and several charts show that. First, traffic to the website between December 1 and January 27 is down 15.9%. Even the main way people find the website, Organic Search, was down 17.7%.

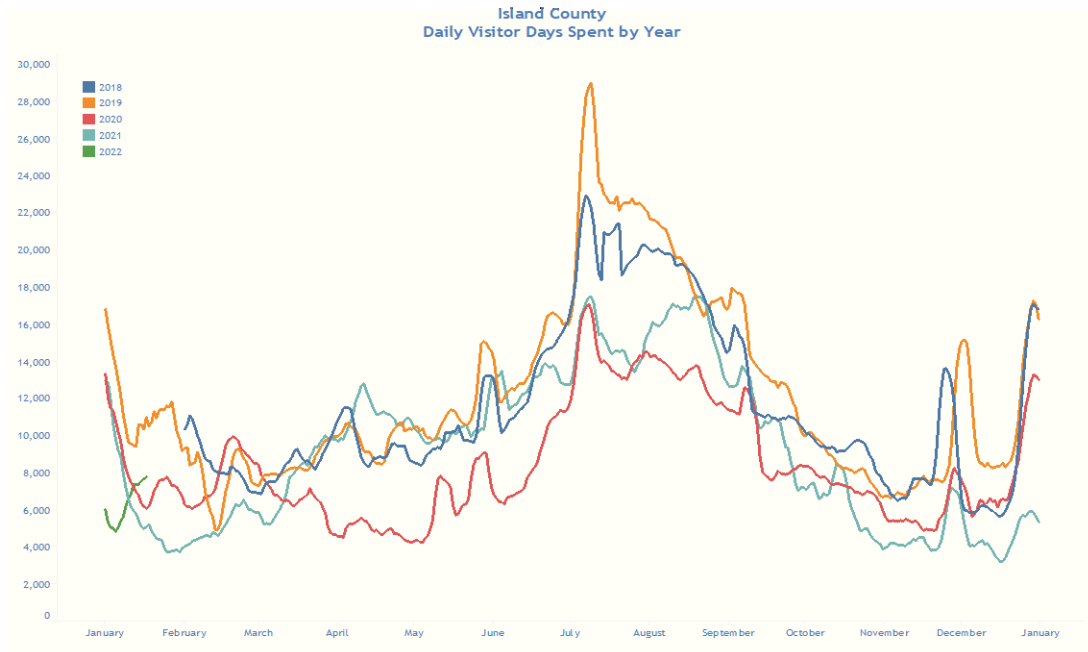
This chart shows day by day traffic to the site as measured by Google Analytics. The peaks are the newsletters that have links back to the website.



The chart on the next page from Datify shows the daily number of visitors (7-day average) from off-island visitors.

You can see 2021 started strong but started fading in September and really dropped in early November.

Finally looking at lodging referrals from the website via Book Direct, the period from December 1, 2021, to January 27, 2022, saw 792 referrals. That same period, but a year earlier saw 854 referrals. That's not a significant drop, but is nevertheless, a drop.



Finally, searches for Whidbey Island or Camano Island—traditionally low in the winter months—are at near-record lows. Searches specifically from Washingtonians, did reach a record low.

The good news is, according to people at Datify, they're seeing a similar drop in other locations besides us.

Our drop well correlates to the spread of the Omicron variant of COVID. But in November, there's an additional drop relative to other years and it correlates well with the reduction in ferry service. But it also could be the impact of the wet weather, power outages, etc. We're looking at the numbers further to see if we can tease this out more clearly.

Is it over?

Let's finish on an up note. The last week—January 21 – January 27, Google Analytics showed an improvement in the number of website visitors over last year of 31%.

Email

The latest email was sent on January 27. It returned to a format that spotlights events and features a story about winter activities on Camano Island. Since it went out just a day ago (as of this writing), we're still gathering data on it.

[https://mailchi.mp/whidbeycamanoislands/which-amazing-season-is-overlooked-by-many-camano-island-visitors-and-time-is-running-out-on-our-latest-travel-giveaway?e=\[UNIQID\]](https://mailchi.mp/whidbeycamanoislands/which-amazing-season-is-overlooked-by-many-camano-island-visitors-and-time-is-running-out-on-our-latest-travel-giveaway?e=[UNIQID])

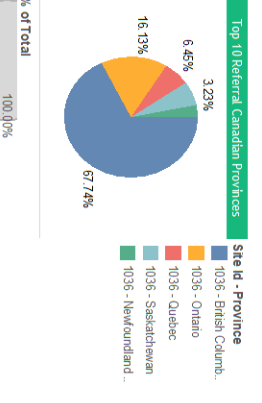
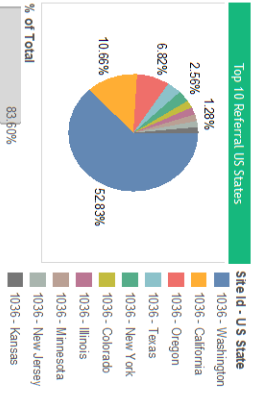
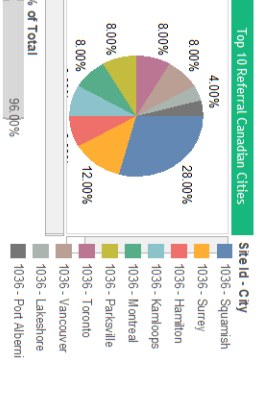
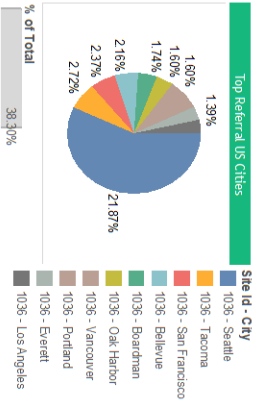
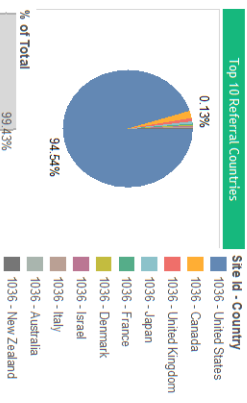
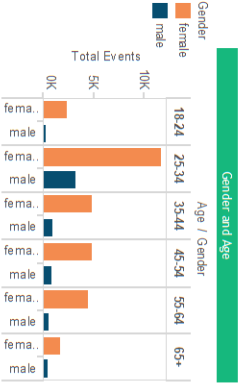
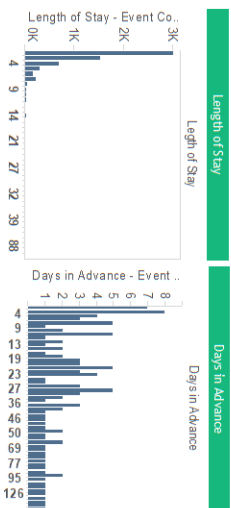
Performance Summary - 2021

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



Start Date: 1/1/2021, End Date: 12/31/2021, Site: white/canadian/all, Lodging Categories: ds.com

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| Avg Cost Per Referral | \$0.48 |
| Avg Referrals Per Booking | 31.63 |
| Referral to Booking C/R | 3.16% |
| Est Avg Cost Per Booking | \$15.33 |
| Est Avg Booking Amount | \$410.36 |
| Cost Per Reservation | 3.7% |
| Searches | 11,968 |
| Search to Referral Ratio | 131.69% |
| Total Referrals | 15,785 |
| Est Bookings | 499 |
| Est Total Spend | \$7,660 |
| Est Booking Revenue | \$204,768.27 |
| Est ROI | 26.8 |
| Searches | 2500% |
| Referrals | |
| Avg Advance Stay in Days | 55.22 |
| Referrals | 34.74 |
| Avg Length of Stay in Days | 3.43 |
| Referrals | 2.84 |
| Avg Daily Rate | \$213.25 |
| Referrals | \$144.49 |



\$13.36 million

Total economic impact/ROI
of the Tourism Website
in 2021.



Figures based on the DMA West study finding the total ROI of a website per new visitor of \$37.17 multiplied by the 359,358 new visitors to the Whidbey and Camano Islands Website from 1/1/21 to 12/31/21 as measured by Google Analytics.

- d. **2022 Leadership elections** , Gregg moved to approve the following slate for 2022: Commissioner Melanie Bacon, Chair, Chet Ross- Vice Chair, Robyn Myers - Secretary, Jessica McCreedy – Alternate Secretary, Dianne Binder – Treasurer. No dissents and the new leadership was approved.

6. Chamber Round Table:

- a. Camano- Glass Quest preparations are in full swing. Currently have 143 members, which is a very robust number for their chamber. Cama Beach mentioned visitor ship and occupancy has been very high.
- b. Oak Harbor- they are rebuilding their popular windmill, working with county on airport use and the music festival for 2022 is being planned. Main Street will have lots of activities in the spring, including a Sasquatch Walk.
- c. Coupeville-they launched a new website. Chocolate Walk is this weekend and is sold out. Mussel festival ticket sales are popular. No new ferries will be available until 2025.
- d. Freeland- discussion continues around July 3 fireworks. Blueberry festival is planned in July with more off island bands.
- e. Langley - Mystery weekend is happening later this month and is very popular. Blue Heron canoe family with tribal representatives are coming in July.

7. **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 12:50 pm.

Next regular meeting is to be communicated via email. Meeting minutes recorded by Robyn Myers and reviewed for submission by Jessica McCreedy.