

Meeting Minutes
Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism of Island County
July 7, 2022
Zoom

Guest: Erin Osborne, President Osborne Northwest Public Relations– Erin provided an update to the philosophy which drives connections with travel writers, sought out press and social presence. Year to date they’ve secured 94 pieces of earned media, creating 3.92 million impressions. They are working to be proactive with selected markets that are like minded that support an emphasis on stewardship or finding the path less traveled.

Quorum: x=members present

Mayor Scott Chaplin	Com. Melanie Bacon	Jackie Henderson X
Alannah Johansen X	Gregg Lanza	OH Lodging- Vacant
Maggie Bailey X	Max Lindsay-Thorsen X	Tom Felvey X
Janae Cameron/Christina Swan	Jessica McCready	Chet Ross X
Vicki Graham X	Inge Morascini X	Sharon Sappington, EDC
Lynda Eccles X	Robyn Myers X	Jim Woessner

In addition to the above members, guests also in attendance were:

- Sherrye Wyatt, Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism PR & Marketing Manager, Film Liaison
- Jack Penland Whidbey and Camano Islands digital projects
- Scott Rosenkranz, Whidbey and Camano Island Tourism design projects
- Laura Hilton, Whidbey and Camano Islands special projects
- Amy Bush, VP Camano Arts Association
- Diane Penland, Co-proprietor Computerpix LLC, Whidbey & Camano Island digital project- data analysis
- Dianne Binder, Contract Treasurer
- Erin Osborne, President Osborne Northwest Public Relations

Meeting called to order at 11:42 am by Vice Chair, Chet Ross.

1. **Adoption of Agenda** – Lynda motioned, and Jackie seconded to accept the agenda. Approved with no objections.
2. **Approval of June 2022 Minutes** -Vicki motioned, Inge seconded to approve the minutes. Approved with no objections.
3. **Treasurer's Report and Invoice review** – Dianne presented the latest revenue numbers and budget spend through June. All invoices were approved at the management committee meeting. There were no objections to the invoices presented.
4. **Old Business:**
 - a. **Transformational Travel Council** – Sherrye provided information on the next steps for the team, which includes a survey to be given to 5 people in

person by committee members for the month of July. The committee is working to be more connected on a monthly basis to keep the program forward progressing. It was requested to have talking points on the current process for laypeople in the community. Sherrye is working on something simple for our committee and community members.

5. New Business:

- a. **Management Committee Report-** everything discussed is on the agenda.
- b. **Short Term Rental Trends:** Diane Penland presented a presentation on the growth of short term rentals in Island County. She broke them down by zip code and indicated the data was from VRBO and AirBnB, AirDNA.
- c. **PR Media Report:** Scott is working with local chambers to distribute additional guides as needed. Below is the team's monthly report.

Monthly Tourism Report July 3, 2022

Trails Guide Complete

"24 Trails off the Beaten Path" is completed and 30,000 copies are being distributed. We anticipate this will be enough inventory to last a year, but it may be longer. The PR/advertising program is helping promote it and drive traffic to visitor centers. The TREAD Map App is slowly being built for Whidbey and Camano Islands. Laura and Jack are participating in dashboard training. It will continue to evolve over several months and patience is appreciated.

Upcoming Dates/Meetings:

The **State of Washington Tourism Summit Oct. 11-12** at Hilton Seattle Airport & Conference Center. Everyone in tourism is invited to attend on their own. Cost is \$225 or early bird is \$175 before 8/15/22. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/state-of-washington-tourism-conference-tickets-363189007097> Additional receptions and events to promote certain sectors the days before/after the summit are anticipated (cruise ships, outdoor recreation, film, etc.).

Transformative Destination Program Update

The next step in the process is to "test drive and polish" a draft questionnaire before taking it to the wider community. This July each steering committee member is speaking to five residents who are connected to the tourism industry, within the sector they represent. Every member of the Tourism Committee will be participating eventually. The process is slow and deliberate, and patience is really appreciated as we take the time necessary. We may not have a final plan in place before the 2023 budget is approved, so flexibility is key.

Below are the draft questions.

-

Facilitator Script:

"Tourism is the third largest industry in Island County, but there is a desire to change how this industry interacts with Whidbey and Camano Islands. This desire is to improve the lives of residents, enrich the visitor experience, and benefit the natural environment of the islands.

Whidbey & Camano Islands Tourism, key tourism stakeholders and community members are participating in the Transformational Travel Council's Transformative Destinations Program, as a big step towards transformational and regenerative travel within our islands. This is a move away from simply a "do no harm" concept, with focus on a style of tourism that would genuinely improve and benefit the community.

Local input is essential to this process. I'd like to ask you a few questions, one-to-one, to get your perspective. We will be using this information to help inform the collective values of the islands. I will be asking you the questions, and then taking notes on your responses. It will take approximately 20 minutes. Thank you for your participation.

Name of person facilitating survey:

Name of person completing survey (optional):

Email (optional):

Area where respondent lives or works (e.g. Camano, Clinton, Greenbank, etc.):

How long have you lived in this community?

PART ONE: This section touches on the values and essence of place and community. Facilitator is going to read a few sentences and participant will tell how they feel to them.

- "The environment, wildlife, and being outdoors are valued in this community."
- "Our community members are lifelong learners. People here tend to be adaptable, and open to personal growth."
- "Islands attract creative people."
- "As a community we feel a sense of teamwork, while respecting individuality."

- "History and the arts are important in our community."
- "The culture of the islands is different from other places because _____."
- "Islanders value the spirit and magic of this place."
- "Is there anything else you would like to share that makes this community special, that we haven't touched on?"

PART TWO: Facilitator will and ask participants these questions.

- What do you like most about living here?
- Define your community.
- Can you share something about this place that you feel really captures its essence?
- What are some of the values that you feel are collectively shared WITHIN this community ABOUT this community?
- What are some of the downsides or challenges to living here?
- What would you like visitors to the islands to know about life here?
- Are you involved in or connected to the tourism industry? Yes, No, or Partially (Please explain)

Osborne Northwest Public Relations

Monthly Overview

This month, our team supported the launch of the new publication: Field Guide, 24 Trails off the Beaten Path, including the development of a press release, still and video content and media outreach. We also focused on itinerary development for Leslie Forsberg, a writer visiting on assignment with Country Magazine, while joining in the planning for Transformational Travel Council efforts.

Coming up, we are continuing participation in the development of the strategic plan while development themes and storylines that support responsible travel in support of the community and local businesses.

Project Management

- Secured and developed an itinerary for Leslie Forsberg, visiting on assignment with Country Magazine.

- Developed a press release announcing the Field Guide, 24 Trails off the Beaten Path and distributed to select media for consideration.
- Worked with key media contacts to develop stories and segments listed below, including National Geographic's kelp harvesting piece, the Foodista series (which includes mention of Field Guide launch); Travel Connections podcast, and Food & Travel Magazine.
- Joined team calls for internal planning, as well as group meetings for the Transformational Travel Council.

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 2,280 on May 24 to 2,324 on June 30; a growth rate of 1.75%.

Media Visits

- **Don Pitcher, June 30-July 1**, Moon Guidebook author updating fourth edition of San Juan Islands and surrounding areas, includes Whidbey Island.
- **Leslie Forsberg, June 30-July 2**, freelance writer on assignment with Country Magazine, researching a story on Scenic Byways for a fall issue.
- **Leslie Kelly, summer 2022 (dates pending)** writer for Forbes interested in visiting to explore culinary news and developments.
- **Sara Franklin, October 2022 (dates pending), freelance writer with *Travel + Leisure*** to cover the food and drinks, culinary culture of Whidbey Island.

Pending Press

- **National Geographic**, writer Kristen Pope interviewed Chef Vincent Nattress on a piece regarding how to harvest and prepare kelp.
- **Washington Post**, covering Washington's islands in an upcoming travel story; per a visit with Washington State Tourism's hosted writer in April

- **The Beacon Magazine, published by the Mukilteo Beacon newspaper** will feature a Whidbey getaway piece; we were able to influence photography and suggestions for content. slated for publication in early July
- **West Coast Business Review** will be releasing two more radio segments with Whidbey Island Distillery
- **Food + Travel Magazine:** Whidbey feature story anticipated following visit from Megan Hill in May.
- **Travel Connections/Adventures of Empty Nesters:** Suzanne Stavert will continue to push coverage of her Camano Island studio tour weekend from her podcast (aired June 24), but content will continue to be shared on her social channels and mention on her future podcasts.
- **Camano Connections; Sherrye Wyatt was interviewed June 29 for the podcast airing later this summer.**

Press Highlights include 19 pieces of coverage with an estimated 23.5 million impressions. To view the coverage in [full go here.](#)

6. Chamber Round Table:

- a. Clinton – No one from the chamber was present or a report given.
- b. Langley - Inge Morascini shared they have lots of visitors, but restaurants not open due to staffing. Retailers are seeing a tightening in the average purchase totals. Harvest Festival planning is underway.
- c. Freeland - They are concerned about a local effort to purchase the Freeland Harbor Inn and are considering the buyer and the ultimate purpose.
- d. Oak Harbor – Vicki Graham reported the 4th of July event went off successfully with a busy and active crowd.
- e. Coupeville – They hosted a job fair, which was successful. A golf tourney, Arts & Crafts Festival and Plein Air event are planning August.
- f. Camano – Alannah shared that Cama Beach State Park is working on children’s programming and a Quilt Show in July. Amy Bush shared that they have a marketing committee that is looking to utilize some of the news from today’s meeting with her organization.

7. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 12:51 pm.

Next regular meeting is Thursday, August 4 via Zoom.

Meeting minutes recorded by Robyn Myers and reviewed by Jessica McCready