

Meeting Minutes
Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism of Island County
June 2, 2022
Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce, Oak Harbor

Guest: Dean Runyan Report – Jordan Bohlander provided a report on the travel impacts to Island County for 2019-21. 72% of lodging rental revenue are found in hotel, motel and short term rentals. Local taxes increased by 29% supported by general increases in visitor spending in 2021.

Quorum: x=members present

Mayor Scott Chaplin X	Com. Melanie Bacon X	Jackie Henderson X
Alannah Johansen	Gregg Lanza X	OH Lodging- Vacant
Dianne Binder X	Max Lindsay-Thorsen X	Tom Felvey
Janae Cameron/Christina Swan	Jessica McCreedy X	Chet Ross X
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:

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

Russ Riddle, Camano Arts Association

Diane Penland, Co-proprietor Computerpix LLC, Whidbey & Camano Island digital project- data analysis

Cynthia Mason – TTC Steering Committee Member

Meeting called to order at 11:30 am by Vice Chair, Chet Ross.

1. **Adoption of Agenda** – Jackie motioned, and Inge seconded to accept the agenda. Approved with no objections.
2. **Approval of May 2022 Minutes** -Inge motioned, Max 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 May. All invoices were approved at the management committee meeting. There were no objections to the invoices presented.
4. **Old Business:**
 - a. **Trails Guide Update** –Scott showcased a few samples of the trail guide. The full order of trail guides should be received in 2-3 weeks. Challenges surrounding supply chain and import issues related to customs. Distribution

will be done at lodgings and chamber of commerce entities. If individuals are interested, they can send an email to info@whidbeycamanoislands.com.

5. New Business:

a. Transformational Travel Council:

i. May workshop- the 2 day workshop at Camp Casey included 20 people moving through the process of transformational travel and how Whidbey and Camano Islands can utilize traveler impact. The next step is to share the shared values identified to direct future conversations.

ii. Immersive Event- invitation only conference to consider attending. Covid, cost of travel and timing are concerns about the necessity to send someone in 2022. We can participate without sending someone to the conference as a partner and perhaps as a panel speaker.

b. Management Committee Report- everything discussed is on the agenda.

c. PR Media Report: Below is the team's monthly report.

SHERRYE WYATT PR & WRITING

Dean Runyon Report Rolling Out

2022 is the third year of a three-year contract to provide data for Island County with islands and towns broken out. Jordan is presenting it at the June 2 tourism committee meeting. The final report will be shared countywide following this presentation.

- **Jordan Bohlander:** Project manager at Dean Runyan Associates (DRA), with 10 years of experience in quantitative data analysis-the last five with a focus on the travel industry. Prior to DRA he worked in the energy sector serving multiple clients across the U.S. and Canada. Knowledge of computer programming and database management systems to augment educational background in marketing, finance, and economics. Manages travel impacts studies in AZ, OR, OK, TX, and WY. Maintains all database systems supporting all company research projects and develops tools to enhance DRA's economic model.
- **Dean Runyon:** Since 1984, DRA offers services in economic and market research. They specialize in market studies, project feasibility analysis, economic impact analysis, and attractions planning and development. DRA is particularly experienced with helping counties and regions analyze their travel and tourism industries. Having helped pioneer the measurement of travel impacts in the 1980s, they developed specialized data management and analysis methods for this work and are one of only a few firms in the US that specialize in this type of research. Their approach is particularly appropriate for destination regions as it largely relies on local data sources that can be updated, documented, and justified.

Port of Seattle Spotlight Advertising at SEA and new Itineraries for IPW

Sherrye applied and was chosen to receive free space at SEA airport offered by the Port of Seattle through the Spotlight Advertising program. The large double-sided screen will

be in the S Terminal and run July 1 – Oct 1 to promote future travel to visitors during what is expected to be a very busy few months at SEA airport. There are production/installation expenses and a special wall advertising tax. She is also working with Brad Jones and Patti Denny at the Port of Seattle on a new Whidbey and Camano Islands itineraries, making adjustments to work in the reality that international travel is booked. These will be rolled out at IPW this June.

Trails Guide

“24 Trails off the Beaten Path” is being printed and sent to the bindery for completion. A sampling of copies will be shared in person at the June tourism committee meeting with the full distribution expected mid-June.

Transformative Destinations Update

The Steering Committee met in person for a two-day workshop at Camp Casey. The September in-person workshop is set for Camano Island. In the meantime, the virtual meetings continue and participants are reviewing the Destination Values before moving into the community with them. The global in-person gathering Transcend is **Oct 9-12** in Slovenia and Whidbey and Camano Islands is invited to send a participant <https://www.transformational.travel/ttc-gathering-event-page> There are also partnership levels which offer additional ways to participate without traveling to the event. The lowest official Transcend Partnership level is \$3,160 and includes a number of benefits and opportunities including positioning our destination as a global thought leader in the new transformational and regenerative tourism industry circle.

Here is more on partnership levels

https://www.canva.com/design/DAE7m3ygzlY/edo8bUfXcOKYSxFHLEw_fQ/view?utm_content=DAE7m3ygzlY&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton#1

Laura Hilton has been assisting with scheduling and communications amongst the steering committee. This includes preparations for the in-person workshop held in May at Camp Casey, and the upcoming September workshop on Camano, plus distributing information from our facilitators via email and a Facebook group. She is doing data entry and document creation as needed, while researching content for our upcoming gatherings and the creation of a new action plan. Laura is attending relevant webinars as we navigate this next stage of pandemic travel, and following all updates from State of WA Tourism and WA Filmworks.

Upcoming Dates/Meetings:

TREAD Map App is scheduling a special work session on **June 13** at 4 p.m. Email invite coming soon. Transformative Destination virtual meetings **June 15** and another date to be scheduled to discuss Destination Values. Sherrye is presenting to the Oak Harbor Rotary on **June 24** and Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce on **Sept. 15**. State of Washington Tourism workshop and summit dates to continue holding are **Oct. 11-12** for in person meetings in Seattle which everyone is invited to attend.

TREAD Map App Update from State of Washington Tourism:

We're excited to announce that TREAD map is available in app stores for Apple, with Android availability to follow within a day or so (each has a unique application process for new apps, and timelines vary as a result). We're thrilled to have met our target of going live by Memorial Day. We want to start by thanking you for your partnership. We couldn't have done it without you! By investing time and other resources in TREAD Map, you are powering sustainable recreation and driving economic development for all communities.

In addition to national publicity efforts already underway, a PR campaign continues throughout the summer that will leverage news hooks such as summer holidays, travel advisories, recreation tips that encourage dispersal and more. This is a critical moment of the lifecycle of TREAD Map, and we're counting on your continued partnership. Right now, we are in Phase 1 of launch, which is focused on filling the app with local content and getting it ready for Phase 2, a statewide download campaign for outdoor enthusiasts over the 4th of July weekend. Here are a few next steps (abridged version):

1. **Download the app.** TREAD Map and begin using it to explore your county/region's content in the app. Take it out on a hike, record a track, and explore its functionality.
2. **Tell nonprofits and user groups about TREAD Map.** TREAD Map is a great tool to help visitors to your communities recreate respectfully, and it will be most meaningful when populated with content from local users. You can use the Toolkit for User Groups (attached) to do some initial outreach, and invite to our TREAD Map webinar on June 13 at 4pm. An invite will be sent out next week.

Here is the timeline, with supporting marketing assets to follow in coming weeks:

Phase 1. App launch and testing with counties and key user groups May 27-June 30

Phase 2. Public marketing campaign and testing from outdoor enthusiasts and early adopters across the state July 1-August 31

Phase 3. Second round marketing campaign September 1 (Labor Day).

Phase 4. Snow/Winter content campaign December 1

Phase 5. TREAD Map at full capacity, with advertisers and all partners onboarded May 2023

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TREAD Map App User Group Toolkit

Thank you for your interest in TREAD Map, a trail app that connects all outdoor enthusiasts in one platform through real-time interaction with land managers and user groups. It equips outdoor enthusiasts to recreate respectfully through locally-informed messaging and destination management. This app was designed with expertise from outdoor recreation groups across the state to power sustainable recreation. For more

information, check out the [one page](#) and [video](#). Throughout the month of June, we're inviting outdoor recreation groups across the state to use this early iteration of the app and give it a personalized, local feel. Any information you provide via the app will help enhance people's experiences in your region and provide better outdoor rec for all. This is your chance to influence a technology that has a statewide reach and will shape the way people use trails and waterways for years to come.

Instructions

1. Download TREAD Map from any app store
2. Create your account

Use the app on all your outdoor adventures throughout the month of June. All of these actions are found in the main menu after downloading the app.

- Post to TREADtalk
 - i. Trail conditions
 - ii. 2022 updates for permits, access, etc.
- Take a GPS track
- View Events
- Provide Feedback

OSBORNE NORTHWEST PUBLIC RELATIONS

Monthly Overview

This month focused on execution of spring media visits, including an art-focused tour of Camano Island, a travel writer who attended a kelp harvesting workshop and a food focused itinerary for a couple who explored both islands for a national culinary website. We also secured, influenced and fact checked a significant story detailing Whidbey Island's rural charms that ran in the *Seattle Times* this month.

While managing the current scope of visits, we also developed a launch plan and draft messaging for the launch of the Field Guide, slated to release mid-June. Coming up, our storylines will focus on placements that create awareness for the guide and suggested trails, with a message of environmental impact and commitment to responsible recreation.

Project Management

- Managed execution of three media visits this month; resulting in strategic earned media in development – themes are focused on the arts, outdoors and small businesses.
- Developed media strategy and copy development for the launch of the Trail Guide; mid-June launch anticipated. Participated in trail guide proofing, prepared draft press release with soft launch to local media on June 2 with formal, widespread announcement and availability occurring in mid-June.

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 2,259 on April 27 to 2280 on May 24; a growth rate of 1.1%.

Media Visits

- **Michael Fagin, April 28-May 1;** freelance travel writer for Foodista, will write a story about the trails, dining, kayaking, and standup paddleboarding around Whidbey and Camano Islands. Part 1 of his 3-part series has been released with the other remaining stories pending.
- **Megan Hill, May 15-16;** contributing writer for Eater Seattle and Food + Travel Magazine, visited Captain Whidbey Inn for future consideration in her outlets and attended the Salish Sea Garden workshop at Fort Ebey with the North Cascades Institute.
- **Suzanne Stavert, May 14-15;** visited Camano Island for studio tour weekend; plans to share on her social channels (@SuzanneStavert and @AdventuresofEmptyNesters) while creating content for her podcast, Travel Connections and blog www.adventuresofemptynesters.com
- **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

- **Travel Connections:** Suzanne Stavert's podcast featuring the arts community of Camano Island will broadcast on June 24.
- **Washington Post,** covering Washington's islands in an upcoming travel story
- **Beacon Magazine** will feature things to do on Whidbey; slated for July issue

Press Highlights include 16 pieces of coverage with an estimated 31.2 million impressions. To view the coverage in [full go here.](#)

COMPUTERPIX

Executive Summary

On May 21, 2022, AirDNA released a report as to the U.S. April 2022 Monthly Market Review (AIRDNA, 2022). According to the report, there is a 1.7% drop-in occupancy rates across the U.S. in April. The URL for the article is listed at the end of the report. A review of the Puget Sound data gives us an idea of how this might affect Whidbey and Camano Islands.

1. There is increased number of short-term rentals available making it look like the percentage of rentals has decreased.
2. Coastal rentals remain highly sought for destinations

3. 2022 is on track to exceed 2021, a banner year for short-term rentals
4. Nightly rates for short-term rentals are increasing

Website work included:

- 24 Trail Section
- Additional Events
- New Contest
- Camano Art

Videos included:

- 24 Trail Section
- Social media videos for Camano Art
- Interviews for upcoming Transformational Travel Video

Digital Asset Management system is progressing.

Digital Report

AirDNA Article Overview

AirDNA (2022, para. 3) shared that 2021 was a record year for the short-term rental industry. They further acknowledge the decline in the stock market and how that could potentially affect consumer spending on short-term rentals. In spite of the uncertainty of the stock market, consumer spending is up 2.7% during Q1 (para. 4) and there is a sense of optimism for the industry. AirDNA (2022, para. 5) have the following reasons for optimism and concern:

Reasons for Short Term Rental (STR) optimism:

1. Demand is up 25.3% year-over-year (+25% vs. 2019)
2. Average daily rates (ADRs) are up 11.2% YOY (+33.9% vs. 2019)
3. Revenue is 39.4% higher YOY (+67.4% vs. 2019)
4. Available listings reached 1.25 million, up 19.5% YOY (+8.5% vs. 2019)

Reasons for STR concern:

1. Nights booked were down 3.6% YOY to 17.4 million
2. Occupancy was down 1.7% YOY to 60.2% (+11.1% vs. 2019)

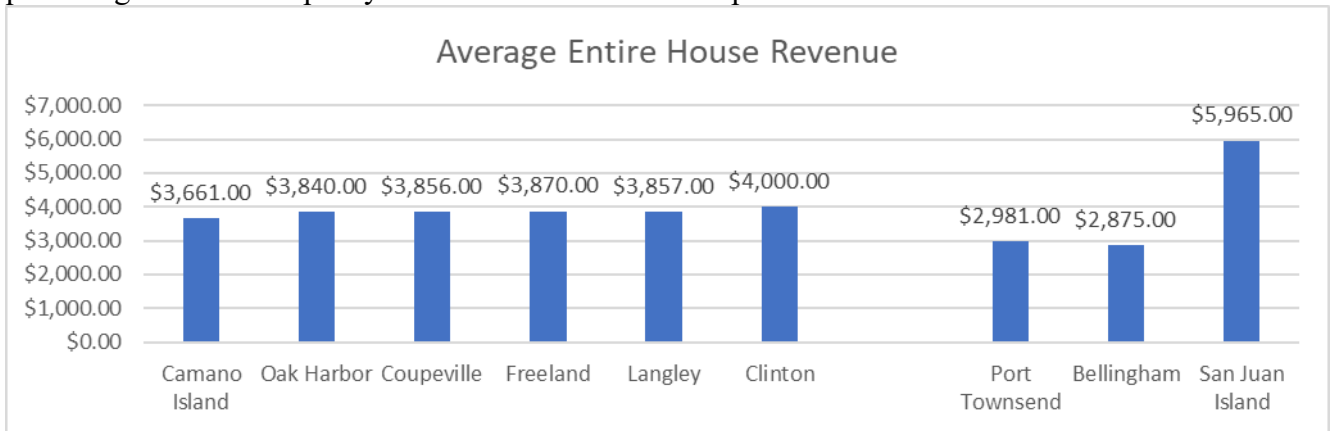
Further review of the article reveals that coastal destinations or resorts is down a little under 3%. However, the explanation for this is that there is an increase of nightly supply of listings on the market, not that there is less demand for nightly rentals (para. 6). Specifically significant to Puget Sound and Bremerton is 62.3% decrease in bookings for April 2022 with a year-over-year change of negative 15.0%.

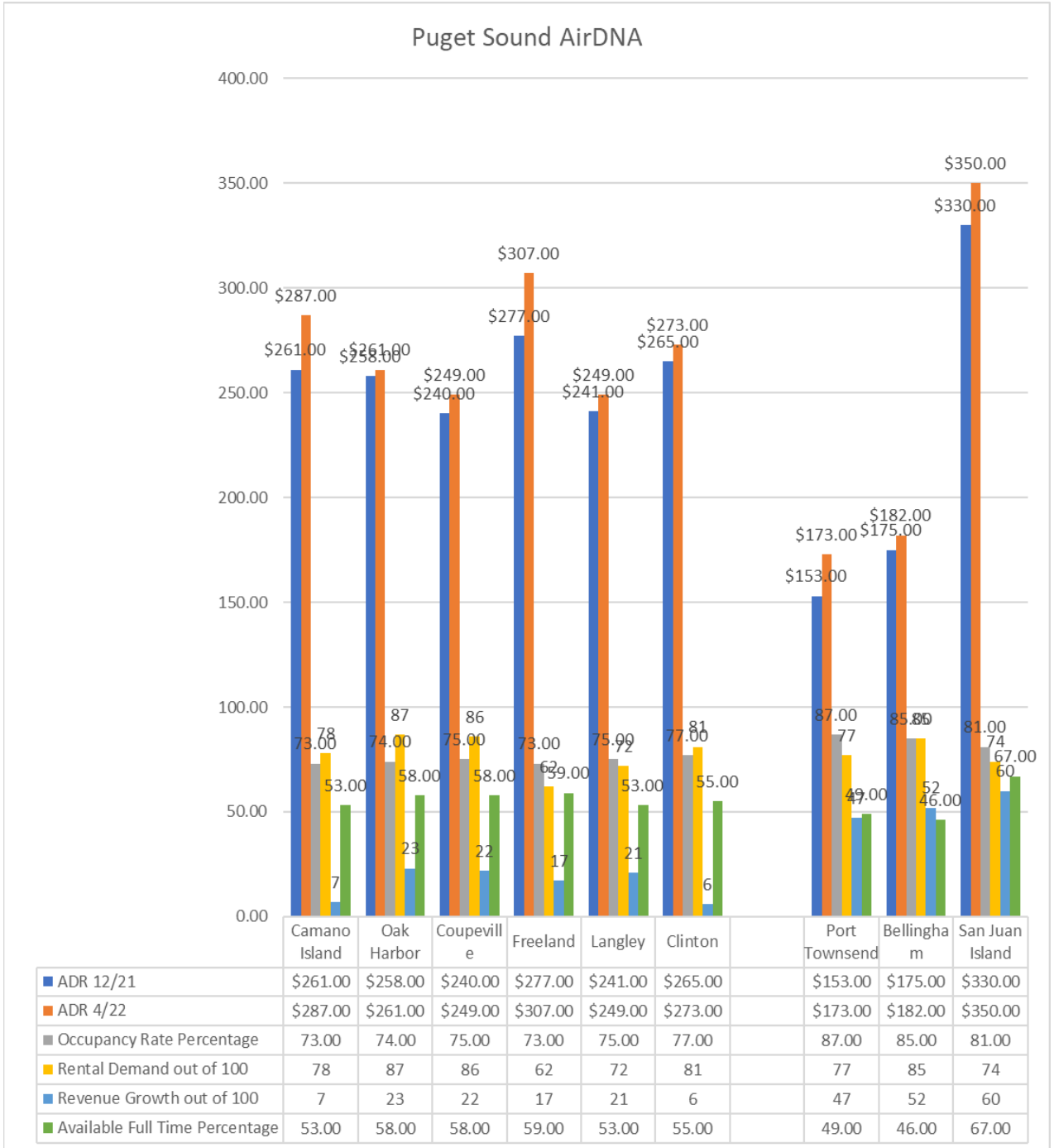
This translates to a 36.4% increase from 2019 (para. 11). So, the Puget Sound area had a large surge in short-term rentals and, while it is now beginning to decrease, it is still above 2019 numbers in April (para. 13). Additionally, the prices to stay in short-term

rentals continues to increase. AirDNA predicts a 12.7% April increase for Destinations/Resorts – Coastal (para. 20). Furthermore, they show Average Daily Rates (ADRs) for the U.S. are pacing 7.9% higher for the summer than last year, and 12.1% higher for coastal destinations (para. 21).

Island County and Puget Sound Data Comparisons

The first chart shows the average revenue generated per entire house rental. Whidbey Islands average revenue per entire house rental is comparable island wide. It skews high for most of the Puget Sound area except for San Juan Island, which is the only island in that region we have data on. The second chart shows the break-down of data on short term rentals by location within Island County and compared to locations within the Puget Sound. As expected, price per night is higher the further into tourist season we get. Fifty-three percent to 58% of entire houses are available year-round for short term rentals. Revenue growth is lower for Island County than for the rest of the Puget Sound as is the percentage rate of occupancy for the areas that were sampled.





AIRDNA. (May 21, 2022). AirDNA Market Review | U. S. April 2022.

https://www.airdna.co/blog/airdna-market-review-us-april-2022?utm_medium=email&hsmi=214309498&hsenc=p2ANqtz-I1T0LgWJhvF5Mo-3Vvh_biH5uPKpZhJQuL50YkCKJMz7B-fpISIPCxtXUZ3-dbpcKkRHtpruTUZRSe9xu7TpUB2ID-w&utm_content=214309498&utm_source=hs_email

Website

Work continues building the content for the 24 Trails segment of the website. I am choosing to wait for sunny days to shoot the 2-minute trailer videos and am also making 15 second versions for social media. The most recent trail shot was the Wilbert Trail at South Whidbey State Park. The most recent trail edited were the trails at Four Springs. Most events are back, and new places are starting to submit events. I'm also combing things like the Whidbey Weekly, CrabCracker, Drew's List and, of course, the various chamber emails for anything that I've missed. Large events that people typically search for that have been cancelled are listed on the calendar as cancelled. The calendar, itself, had been problematic in the last few weeks. People reported they could not advance it to the next month. Michael Bourne found that it was related to a caching problem that has been fixed. Our treehouse contest ended April 30. Our winner is Harold Dufrene of Lockport, La. Our newest contest features a boating trip with Boatsafloat2 along with additional prizes.

Video

I supplied 2 15-second-long videos to the Camano Arts Association so they could publicize their May art tour. I am building a page specifically about art on Camano Island as well as doing a general update of our gallery listings. This Camano Arts page will be a landing page for a writer and podcaster who will be talking about the tour in a June podcast. I have a "note to self" to re-feature this in social media during the weeks prior to the 2023 tour. I've interviewed David Blandford of Washington State Travel along with the three people who facilitated our Transformational Travel Council retreat at Fort Casey. I will be interviewing additional people for a longer video on Transformational Travel.

Digital Asset Management

Simpleview is nearly finished putting together our online Digital Asset Management system. At the start this will have the photographs I've taken over the years that belong to the board as well as photographs contributed by others. Additional assets, including video, will be added in 2022.

Pictures Supplied

Supplied pictures to three publications.

1. Northwest Travel & Life
2. The Beacon Magazine
3. Islander

6. Chamber Round Table:

- a. Clinton – No one from the chamber was present or a report given.
- b. Langley - Inge Morascini shared an the Shakespeare Festival is happening again this year in July. Harvest Festival is planned for October and Inge is interested in any ideas for food providers. Whidbey Island Kayaking has invited everyone on the Tourism Committee to join her and assist in spreading the word on her services in Langley. Mayor Chaplin announced they continue to look for affordable housing for seasonal workers.
- 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 things are getting busier. They are looking for her replacement as she will be departing Oak Harbor in September. 10th year planning is underway for Oak Harbor Music Festival. There are buskers on the corner in downtown Oak Harbor on the corner of Dock and Pioneer Way. Sasquatch Watch is a fun event on June 25 and July 4 are the larger activities.
- e. Coupeville – Memorial Day parade was enjoyable this past weekend. The council approved street closures for the Coupeville Arts and Crafts Festival.
- f. Commissioner Bacon explained the County is announcing an appointment soon for a county administrator.
- g. Sharon Sappington with EDC of Island County mentioned the graduation of Leadership Whidbey and is encouraged about the synergy created with these graduates. Annual Meeting is on June 21 at Nordic Lodge in Coupeville.
- h. Camano – Welcome Camano Island podcast has been launched and is geared towards people new to the area. The first episode is about local parks.

7. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 12:51 pm.

Next regular meeting is Thursday, July 7 via Zoom.

Meeting minutes recorded by Robyn Myers and reviewed by Jessica McCready