

Whidbey & Camano Islands Tourism Committee Meeting

Special Meeting Agenda

November 17, 2022

Zoom

1:30 pm – 3:00pm

1. Call to order - the meeting was called to order by Chet Ross at 1:30
2. Establish a quorum – roll call (X indicates present at meeting)

Mayor Scott Chaplin X (Craig Cyr X)	Com. Melanie Bacon	Jackie Henderson X
Allanah Johansen X	Gregg Lanza	<i>OH Lodging- VACANT</i>
Maggie Bailey X	Max Lindsay-Thorsen X	Chet Ross X
Janae Cameron or Christina Swan X	Jessica McCreedy X	Sharon Sappington, EDC
Magi Aguilar	Inge Morascini X	Jim Woessner
Lynda Eccles X	Robyn Myers X	Tom Felvey X

Guests:

Elizabeth Corcoran, Assistant Audit Manager, [Office of the Washington State Auditor](#)

Sherrye Wyatt, Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism PR & Marketing Manager

Jack Penland Whidbey and Camano Islands digital projects

Laura Hilton, Whidbey and Camano Islands special projects and Film Liaison

Scott Rosenkranz, Whidbey and Camano Island Tourism design projects

Erin Osborne, Media Relations, ON Public Relations

Dianne Binder, Contractor Treasurer

Craig Cyr, Langley City Council Member

Pam Schell, Langley Lodging Tax Advisory Commission

Joann Quintana, Langley Lodging Tax Advisory Commission & Langley Creates Creative District

David Price, Langley Lodging Tax Advisory Commission

Deana Duncan, Executive Director Whidbey Island Center for the Arts & Langley Lodging Tax Advisory Commission

3. Adoption of Agenda - Jackie moved to adopt the agenda, Allanah seconded - agenda adopted as presented.

4. Old Business:

- a. 2023 Budget –

Opening Statement from Chet: The sub-committee of the Whidbey & Camano Islands Tourism group have met and are moving forward on implementing identified changes to our processes and procedures. We are currently listing all meetings on our website, along with minutes from our meetings. We are developing a process for maintaining searchable records to facilitate ease in answering information requests. An annual report is being developed based on Sherrye Wyatt's monthly reports and will be

presented to signers of the Interlocal prior to April 1 of 2023. We have decided to move forward with current contractors contracts through 2023 and will address an RFP process for 2024 contracts in 2023.

Jackie moved to adopt the 2023 budget as presented - Lynda seconded motion. Following discussion the 2023 Budget was put to a vote. 8 Committee Members voted to approve (Jessica, Lynda, Christina, Maggie B., Jackie, Tom, Robyn, Chet and 4 Committee Members abstained (Max, Inge, Alannah, Scott) With a majority voting to approve the 2023 budget as presented, the budget passed.

Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism 2023 BUDGET NARRATIVE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Highlights in 2023 include:

- Complete Regenerative Places Program and launch new strategic plan;
- Create and integrate new tourism brand, which aligns with goals of the strategic plan;
- Create opportunities for our community and guests to embrace the new plan and brand;
- Update and reprint original tourism map (100,000 copies);
- Reprint the 24 Trails off the Beaten Path Guide (15,000 copies) and continue developing the TREAD Map App with State of Washington Tourism;
- Develop and print new Heritage and Culture guide & digital companion (30,000 copies);
- Develop and print new Regenerative Travel Guide & digital companion (30,000 copies);
- Weave into digital storytelling a new emphasis on transformational & regenerative travel;
- Cultivate new media partners and messages reflecting stewardship, community and deep connection to the islands;
- Promote film readiness to create new opportunities for positive experiences for local communities, film productions and visitors; and
- Continue collecting, analyzing and sharing data.

EXPENSES

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

\$183,000

Independent Contractors manage our organization which means we do not have any employees, so we do not pay for any benefits or office expense. Our contractors carry and pay their own health and business insurance and file and pay all their own taxes. Our Public Relations and Marketing Manager is **Sherrye Wyatt Public Relations & Writing** who serves as the lead contractor – which means she oversees the big picture. She will continue to serve as the Destination Ambassador and is responsible for completing and launching the new strategic plan resulting from the **Regenerative Places Program** with the Transformational Travel Council. She is the primary contact for the destination’s tourism efforts. She collaborates and meets regularly with community stakeholders as well as other destination leaders, government agencies, related organizations, and key industry officials, not only within Washington state but around the world.

Also included in this budget area is **Laura Hilton** who contributes digital content development including writing and photography, research, film project management, and a wide variety of roles, including website calendar updates as needed. She will continue to serve as Destination

Liaison throughout the **Regenerative Places Program** and will assist with writing of the final strategic plan, as well as implementation of the new branding strategies expected in 2023. She will be the lead writer on a number of projects in the coming year, including the new **Heritage and Culture** guide and new **Regenerative Travel Guide**. She has been assigned the role of lead **Regional Film Liaison** and has ambitious plans for expanding our film readiness, including developing a network of film ambassadors. The participation of local residents will result in a better coordinated grassroots effort to encourage and support increased film production on both islands.

A new addition to this budget area is the outsourcing of accounting to **Dianne Binder** who is providing monthly reports. Additionally, funding is allocated to secure other professional services if they are needed.

ADVERTISING/PRINTING/DESIGN **\$288,090**

The largest investments in 2023 in this category are the creation of two new guides: **24 Historic and Cultural Experiences** to encourage stewardship and more meaningful experiences for visitors by promoting lesser-known historic and cultural attractions. We are developing this with Island County Historical Society and other local partners on both islands; and a **Regenerative Travel Guide** to encourage stewardship from visitors and promote both islands' communities. We also intend to refresh and print the current **Map**, as well as reprint the **24 Trails off the Beaten Path Guide**. Rosenkranz Productions is doing these projects for the destination.

Most of the advertising planned for 2023 is intentionally being left undefined so that we may be flexible, and focus on the best target messages, audiences and delivery based on what the strategic planning work informs us as we continue working with the Transformational Travel Council. We do plan to continue our relationships and advertise with the **Cascade Loop, Sound Publishing** and several arts events on both islands. We expect to continue to distribute our primary map asset in a few select locations through **Certified Folder**.

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 foresee an increased scope of work over the next year and beyond as print and digital assets are brought into the new transformational brand direction and there is an increased need to reach new and existing audiences with new messaging.

MARKETING/PR/SPECIAL PROJECTS **\$222,000**

This category is quite comprehensive as it includes all expenses related to travel, hosting, trade shows and other unique programs.

Rebranding. One key part of 2023 will be rebranding – to include research, information gathering, creation of concepts for review, feedback and revision and the creation of finalized logo files. This will be followed by the design of a new marketing campaign based on the new transformational direction. Rosenkranz Productions is doing this work for us. A brand equates to how people feel about an organization. Many elements go into this, from how the organization presents itself visually and, in its communications, what others say about it, how the organization

compares to competitors, and of course what people actually experience when they interact with it.

Effective branding can also have a positive impact on an organization's team and partners. Instilling clarity of purpose and pride. Rosenkranz Productions, through the creation of a logo mark, color palettes, typeface selections, and brand guidelines, works to shape people's impression of an organization. Working with the tourism committee's creative team they also help define the voice and personality of Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism.

Taking all of that into account the logo still has a major role to play. It will be the one consistent identifier of the organization across all content and communications. Its job is to: Identify the organization - Who we are - What we do – Personality - and, it should do all of this at a glance, in a clear, engaging and relevant way.

Each element of a logo should work hard to accomplish that job: shapes, images, typefaces, visual organization, silhouette and colors. All of these factors are why branding is one of the most exciting and challenging of design projects. Almost no other project provides such a huge opportunity to positively affect an organization. As part of our ongoing creative services contract, Rosenkranz Productions acts as the brand guardian to ensure consistent usage to minimize brand erosion.

Marketing Campaign. This new campaign will take the place of the long running *Drive off the Mainland* campaign. Its objective will be to inspire both visitors and locals to imagine ways they can positively affect the communities and the culture of Whidbey & Camano Islands.

The tourism creative team will develop the full objective of the campaign. The objective of the campaign will revolve around the strategic plan. And the call to action will most likely be for people to think, and more importantly to act, to help preserve and strengthen the unique nature, communities, and cultures of our islands. Creation of a consistent design theme across all channels of communications. Layout designs, guidelines for typeface use and the relationships between headline, subheads and body copy, and photography. Rosenkranz Productions also helps the campaign evolve over its lifespan to accommodate shifts in the marketplace.

Deliverables:

- Brand Guidelines, to include typefaces, color palettes and usage standards for the new logo and other brand elements.
- Logo files, configured for print, digital and social media use.
- Stationery, to include: business cards, note cards and name tags.
- Marketing campaign ad and collateral layout examples.
- Initial design input for the update of the existing website to incorporate the new brand direction. (Design of a new website would be a separate special project.)

We are paying the second of our two installments to participate in the **TREAD Map App** with the **State of Washington Tourism** and we will continue the successful **Simpleview Lodging Platform**.

For our earned media and media relations work we contract with **Osborne Northwest Public Relations (ON PR)**. The public relations (PR) efforts for the coming year runs in tandem with the shift in strategic focus, programming and mission driven messaging that will evolve as we

complete the final stages of the **Regenerative Places Program**, and the strategic plan rolls out in Spring 2023.

The destination's mission will be supported by messaging and earned media that reflects the regenerative travel pillars. Programs and storylines will be developed to focus on the connection between visitor, community and environment to drive home the importance of regenerative tourism and a sense of place.

An enhanced connection between our work and the community will be reflected in an enhanced reporting chain, ensuring that tourism partners and businesses see and connect our work with the featured stories, placements and brand endorsements they receive from our PR strategies. The most valuable impact of a 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.

Our key messages and media partners will reflect messages of stewardship, community and connection to the islands. We will continue to support regional chambers and communities with targeted event weekend outreach. Themes and stories will be developed and shared with key media partners to amplify small businesses, environmental groups offering hands-on opportunities, chefs and craft producers working in tandem with farmers and similar experiences that invite tourists into the eco-system.

The following will be implemented on an ongoing basis to reflect the stories, goals and message of the organization.

- **Research, Content Development and Strategy Evolution.** Programs, tactics and messaging will support an emphasis on regenerative tourism, highlighting stories that focus on cultural experiences and the connection between the community, environment and the visitor experience. We will develop itineraries/press trip opportunities, 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. This coming year, we plan to hone our visiting media strategy with regenerative travel focus. We can anticipate less volume of visiting media, yet longer stays and more detailed stories and experiences.

- **Selective Media Outreach and Engagement.** Efforts with influencers and traditional media continue to be implemented to ensure seamless publicity and relationship management. Partnerships and collaborations will align with our regenerative travel themes as listed above. This includes connection through story pitching, media visits (individual and group FAMs will be evaluated) and Instagram engagement in real time. Sample media targets will include:

- Digital media brands and content creators that focus on sustainable and regenerative tourism topics like [Green Global Travel](#) , [The Dharma Trails](#), [Ecotravelist](#), [The Crowded Planet](#) and similar brands.

- Travel media with a sustainable or environmental focus like *Sunset Wildlands*, *Outside*, *AFAR*, *National Geographic*, *NPR*.

- High profile regional media like *KING 5 Evening*, *Seattle Magazine*, *Seattle Met*, *Northwest Travel*.

Note that many of these regional and national outlets have covered us in previous years, but it's important to nurture these relationships to share the destination's shift in focus, generating the "right stories" and messages.

- **Instagram Engagement.** Manage the @GoWhidbeyCamano Instagram account, posting 2-3 times per week, resharing relevant Instagram stories, and engaging the community (liking, commenting, messaging) with influencers, island community members, and businesses to ensure we're maintaining meaningful engagements in real time.
- **Content partnerships.** While earned media is the focus of our PR efforts, this year we may seek an opportunity to fully "own" our key messages. Sponsored content opportunities will be evaluated to own and drive home the messages of stewardship. This could be creative content placements with the drive market - in partnership with NPR or KING 5. Topics could be Sound Water Stewards on Digging for Dinner and Best Beach Practices with the Cama Beach Foundation, Trail Tips with Whidbey Camano Land Trust, How to Eat Acorns with the Garry Oak Society and more.
- **Seek and vet travel programming, partnerships, conferences and events.** This year, we will seek new opportunities to connect with sustainable travel experts, regenerative tourism programs and networking opportunities that place our organization in front of this key audience of media and stakeholders. Examples we'll consider include [SKIFT Sustainable Tourism Conference](#) and [Transend](#) (TTC). In previous years, we've selected events like International Media Marketplace, IFTWA and others – we will review agendas and opportunities with these organizations but prioritize events with a focus on sustainable tourism.

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

Making the connection between media outreach can be immediate but can also take months (or sometimes years!) to come to fruition. This year, we are developing a new communications procedure to ensure that partners mentioned in the media we influence will receive an alert as soon we know the media is placed.

We also compile the press received 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

\$17,000

Data and research continues to be valuable. **Dean Runyon:** For the fourth 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:** We are entering our third 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. The information we purchased from AirDNA can be obtained through Datafy so we are going to include that this year.

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 more than 26,000 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 rebranding potentially an outcome of our strategic planning, much of the look and feel of our **digital marketing** will need to be reworked in 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 heritage/culture.**” There will be an expanded section that will complement the new guide and include maps and videos. A new emphasis on transformational and regenerative travel will be woven into our storytelling, as well as efforts to embrace our new brand.

It will take considerable time for our audience to catch up with these changes, so there will have to be an effort to keep old content fresh, and at the same time, create new content. The e-commerce aspect of the website is also something that should get fresh emphasis in 2023, including more internal linking to lodging and more descriptive storytelling, again with an eye towards stewardship and regenerative travel opportunities.

Included in this budget area are a number of important digital subscriptions, platforms and tools including **MailChimp, Facebook Ads, HootSuite, Buffer, Co- Schedule, Word Press Plugins, Trello, Cloudways Hosting, Simpleview Asset Management.** Periodically we also contract with an exceptionally talented IT expert **Michael Bourne.** ComputerPIX will also continue to offer detailed analytics from Datafy, Book Direct (Simpleview) and Google Analytics. 2023 will feature a regular rotation of reports with each month focusing upon a different facet such as travelers, lodging, and marketing. ComputerPIX has also become one of the early adopters of Datafy’s 2.0 data system, which will allow us to generate reports about major events.

2023 BUDGET

Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism 2% Joint Advisory Board

	2023	2022	Difference
<u>PROFESSIONAL SERVICES</u>			
Marketing Coordinator - Wyatt	\$108,000	\$108,000	\$0
PR Support/Fulfillment/Admin/Film - Hilton	\$60,000	\$35,000	\$25,000
Professional Services/Accounting	\$15,000	\$0	\$15,000
Subtotal Professional Services	\$183,000	\$143,000	\$40,000
<u>ADVERTISING/PRINTING/DESIGN</u>			
Advertising/Print/Radio/TV	\$33,000	\$43,000	(\$10,000)
Printing & Development – 24 Cultural Heritage Guide	\$85,445	\$0	\$85,445
Printing & Development - Regenerative Guide	\$85,445	\$0	\$85,445
Reprinting 24 Trails Guide	\$38,000	\$50,000	(\$12,000)
Rebranded Map/Brochure	\$15,000	\$0	\$15,000
Rosenkranz Productions/Routine Graphic Design	\$31,200	\$21,600	\$9,600
Subtotal Advertising	\$288,090	\$114,600	\$173,490
<u>MARKETING/PR/SPECIAL PROJECTS</u>			
PR Hosting/Contests/Shows/Travel	\$30,000	\$38,300	(\$8,300)
Osborne NW Media Relations/Earned Media/Instagram	\$72,000	\$54,000	\$18,000
Fulfillment Postage/Supplies/Storage	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$0
Strategic Planning	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$0
Rebranding	\$23,000	\$0	\$23,000
TREAD Map App	\$15,000	\$0	\$15,000
Special Projects/R & D	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$0
Ferry Marketing & Distribution	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$0
Simpleview - Lodging Platform	\$8,000	\$12,000	(\$4,000)
Memberships*	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$0
Subtotal Marketing & Public Relations	\$222,000	\$178,300	\$43,700
<u>RESEARCH</u>			
Datafy	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$0
Dean Runyon	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$0
AirDNA**	\$0	\$9,600	(\$9,600)
Subtotal Research	\$17,000	\$26,600	(\$9,600)
<u>DIGITAL</u>			
Platforms/Social Media/Ads/Platforms/Mail Chimp/Hoot Suite/ Buffer/Co-Schedule/Michael Bourne/WordPress Plugins/ Trello/Cloudways Hosting/Ads	\$30,000	\$25,000	\$5,000
ComputerPIX/Videos/Website Management/New Content/Listings/TREAD/Photography/ Blog Posts/Data Analysis/Web Refresh/Simpleview Asset Management	\$120,000	\$70,000	\$50,000
Subtotal Digital	\$150,000	\$95,000	\$55,000
GRAND TOTAL	\$860,090	\$557,500	\$302,590

*combined with marketing, no longer its own category

**Datafy contract will include this information now

5. Adjourn - the meeting was adjourned at 1:54

Meeting Minutes recorded by Jessica McCready, reviewed by Robyn Myers