

**Meeting Minutes  
Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism of Island County  
December 1, 2022  
Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce**

**Quorum:** x=members present

Mayor Scott Chaplin Craig Cyr X	Com. Melanie Bacon X	Jackie Henderson X
Alannah Johansen	Gregg Lanza X	OH Lodging- Vacant
Maggie Bailey	Max Lindsay-Thorsen X	Tom Felvey X
Christina Swan X	Jessica McCready X	Chet Ross X
Magi Aguilar 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  
 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  
 Dianne Binder, contract treasurer  
 Marie Shimada, Reserve Manager, Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve  
 Pam Schell, Langley Lodging Tax Advisory Committee  
 Denna Garza, Office of the Washington State Auditor - Team Bellingham Audit Manager  
 David Price, Langley Lodging Tax Advisory Committee  
 Katie Grindon, Clinton Chamber of Commerce

Meeting called to order at 11:07 am by Vice Chair, Chet Ross.

1. **Public Comment (3 minutes limit)**- no comment was given.
2. **Adoption of Agenda** – Jackie motioned, and Lynda seconded to accept the agenda. Approved with no objections.
3. **Approval of November 3, 2022 Minutes** -Jackie motioned, Lynda seconded to approve the minutes. Correction, Craig Cyr should be listed as the Langley Alternate. With this correction, the minutes were approved with no objections.
4. **Approval of November 17, 2022 Minutes** -Lynda motioned, Jackie seconded to approve the minutes. Minutes were approved with no objections.
5. **Treasurer's Report and Invoice review** – Dianne presented the Treasurer's Report. Langley, Coupeville and Oak Harbor are past due on 2 quarters of payments. Craig, Jackie and Sherrye were going to follow up with the entities. There were no questions or objections to the invoices or budget spending for the year.
6. **Old Business:**
  - a. **Bylaw Amendment & Interlocal Agreement Committee:** Chet reported he had a conversation with the legal counsel, but not yet had any updates. Jackie asked if there will be a draft.

**b. Regenerative Places Program Update:**

For the past 10 months, Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism has been participating as an early adopter in the Transformational Travel Council's Regenerative Places Program. A group of 20 stakeholders from both islands committed to this process and have been going through extensive coursework, which included monthly virtual meetings as well as two multi-day in-depth, in-person workshops. We have surveyed the community and are currently processing what we've learned to incorporate into our next steps as we craft the plan.

Our islands are unique. What I will need from you are recommendations as we create a PLAN to roll out the draft plan out to the community to get constructive feedback. Probably need a few different ways including both virtual and in-person discussions. Perhaps even have something online for people to provide comment, as well as working with organizations to present to their members. I anticipate this happening in early spring. We will continue to work on the plan and to update this tourism committee at our monthly meetings.

Some of you have asked to hear as a refresher, a comprehensive definition of Regenerative Tourism. This was provided to me by Marina Laurent who is one of our facilitators.

"Regenerative tourism applies the regenerative development approach to tourism contexts, drawing from Western science and Indigenous perspectives and knowledge systems. It is a transformational approach that aims to fulfill the potential of tourism places to flourish and create net positive effects through increasing the regenerative capacity of human societies and ecosystems.

The approach seeks to transform tourism into Tourism living systems that facilitate encounters, create connections and develop reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships through travel practices and experiences, uniquely reflecting tourism places. Regeneration occurs mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually, culturally, socially, environmentally, and economically."

Source: Transformative roles in tourism: adopting living systems' thinking for regenerative futures.

How Regenerative Tourism is different from sustainability:

Regenerative Tourism implies a complete paradigm shift from a post-industrial revolution mechanistic worldview (the sustainability one) to an ecological one.

In the traditional approach to sustainability, which relies primarily on a capitalist economic model, we consider that nature is at the service of the

satisfaction of human needs and where our relationship with it comes down to extracting resources, producing goods, consuming goods and throwing away in a linear way. Performance is measured in financial terms, and the mere durability of this economic system relies on infinite economic growth.

The ecological worldview (or regenerative one), on the other hand, consists in understanding humans as part of a greater ecosystem, designing in harmony with nature, and organizing human activities in collaboration with nature in a circular, co-evolving approach. The emphasis is put on a more collaborative approach with different stakeholders: partnerships and synergies are key to achieve greater goals, greater purpose, create value-adding processes for a wide range of stakeholders on a long-term perspective.

## 7. New Business:

- a. **Management Committee Report-** everything discussed is on the agenda
- b. **Report on the State Auditors Audit:** Deena Garza shared they are actively reviewing the make up of the Island County Tourism Committee and are taking a slow and thoughtful look at the current organizations. Chet has communicated with them multiple times and the committee continues to share information as it is requested. Audit won't be done until February or March 2023
- c. **PR Media Report:** Below is the creative team's monthly report which was submitted in writing. Some questions asked about a downturn in Airbnb rentals, which did see a small downturn. Sherrye is planning to incorporate the Regenerative Places Report Summary in the 2023 marketing plan. Much of the marketing plan is staying the same as the creative team has been planning for transformational travel to Whidbey & Camano Islands.

## MONTHLY TOURISM REPORT

NOVEMBER 28, 2022

### SHERRYE WYATT PUBLIC RELATIONS & WRITING

#### **Regenerative Places Program**

Virtual and in-person meetings and work continues with the Transformational Travel Council Regenerative Places Program. We have scheduled several more virtual work sessions with some (and even in some cases all) members of the Steering Committee (Nov. 28, Dec. 1, Dec. 2, Dec. 5, Dec. 6, Dec.13, Dec. 15 and Mar. 15, 2023). Meetings in January and February are also being scheduled. Vicki Graham has agreed to represent Whidbey and Camano Islands at the **Hawaii Tourism Conference** in Dec. 5-6. This DMO is a global leader in adopting new sustainable and regenerative travel, and we feel fortunate that we have a Steering Committee member living in the Hawaiian Islands, where so much groundbreaking work is taking place.

Here is the *draft* format/outline for the Regenerative Guidelines for Action Report we are preparing with the Transformational Travel Council for 2023. It will be a “living” document:

### **Introduction**

- a) Overview of the project
- b) Project rationale
- c) Contextualizing regeneration & transformation (vs. greenwashing)
- c) Participants
- d) Timeline

### **Methodology**

- a) Participant selection
- b) Online gatherings
- c) Workshop 1 - details
- d) Surveys & Interviews
- e) Workshop 2 - details
- f) Implementation

### **Desired Future State**

- a) Explanation of its purpose
- b) Statement\*

### **Manifesto**

- a) Explanation of its purpose
- b) Statement\*\*

### **Vision & Values**

- a) Process
- b) As a group
- c) As a community

### **Regenerative Goals**

- a) Explanation of their purpose
- b) Detail of each\*\*\*

### **Regenerative Action Plan**

- a) Overview of its purpose
- b) Theory of Change tables per pillar (to illustrate process)
- c) Action Plan table with each task listed (for ease of use)

### **What's Next**

- a) Approach to implementation

Here is a preview of some of the *draft* notes from the Destination Assessment Report which will be used to create our plan. Asterisks indicate where they fit within the above outline:

**\*Desired Future:** *Islands in harmony where people and nature thrive in a culture of ongoing transformation.*

**\*\*Manifesto:** *Together we are bridge-builders. We aspire to connect and foster a sense of belonging, while honoring the uniqueness of our inhabitants and our communities, we celebrate our shared identity. We share this sense of place, hoping you bring your whole self to us as you engage with our community and awe-inspiring natural environment. As stewards of these islands, we strive to honor our interconnections and restore balance and mutual respect among all living things. Honoring those who came before us, we are creating a home for generations to come. We offer our whole selves to you, and we part better, strong, and more resilient, because of our time together.*

**\*\*\*Four Pillars:**

- 1) Healthy Nature:** *All community members nurture, respect and value the marine and land ecosystem;*
- 2) Access:** *Cultivate a rich quality of life for all inhabitants through equitable access to all resources within Island County;*
- 3) Bridge Building:** *Unify all community members through efficient communications systems throughout our islands; and*
- 4) Transformational Mindset:** *Create positive change in the distinct communities of our islands through mindful engagement, authentic participation, and active learning.*

**Maritime Washington National Heritage Area**

Good news! The Management Plan was approved by the Secretary of the Interior. This approval represents the culmination of over **10 years** of hard work and significant collaboration between hundreds of individuals, organizations, governments, and Tribes along our state's saltwater shoreline, including Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism. Maritime Washington's designation in 2019 marked a landmark recognition of the significance of our state's maritime heritage. Find the 496-page plan here: [Mgmt-Plan-5.3.22-reduced-size.pdf \(preservewa.org\)](#) or find the 6-page summary here: [Mgmt-Plan-5.3.22-executive-summary-excerpt.pdf \(preservewa.org\)](#)

**Creative Economy by the Numbers**

Residents and visitors to Whidbey and Camano Islands know how important the arts are. Here are some facts at the state level [Creative Economy - ArtsWA](#). Community leaders in Langley were one of the early adopters to go through the extensive process to become formally recognized as a Creative District [Creative District Communities - ArtsWA](#). Leaders throughout both islands including Coupeville and Oak Harbor, are currently exploring the process of supporting, and in some cases even achieving, this recognition as well.

**OSBORNE NORTHWEST PUBLIC RELATIONS**

**Monthly Overview**

This month our team laid the groundwork for the coming year, developing a new reporting structure and media visit strategy. We presented to the tourism committee and

look forward to a successful 2023. In the short term, media relations activities focused on holiday events and happenings on the islands with coverage anticipated through the holiday season. We hosted a key Vancouver BC travel writer, showing and sharing Veteran's Day themed experiences along with key island adventures. We also wrapped the long anticipated, high-profile *Travel + Leisure* visit, which was very successful. This significant story is slated to appear in the first part of 2023; our team is in touch with the editorial team on timing and story details.

### **Project Management**

- Developed a calendar alert of holiday events taking place on the islands; pitched a variety of short lead outlets.
- Worked with community businesses and media contacts to develop detailed itineraries for upcoming media visits.
- Joined three team and tourism committee meetings to discuss marketing alignment for 2023; developed early for the coming year.

### **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 2,481 on October 26<sup>th</sup> to 2,503 on November 25 a growth rate of .88%.

### **Media Visits**

- **Sara Franklin, October 30-November 2, freelance writer with *Travel + Leisure*** to cover the food and drinks, culinary culture of Whidbey Island.
- **Wendy Nordvick-Carr, November 10-13, freelance travel writer** to cover travel to Whidbey Island. Wendy reaches a key audience in Vancouver BC through her travel blog and social channels, [Life's Incredible Journey](#). Publishing date TBD.

### **Pending Press**

- **Waterways** - Bob Cooper will be writing a story on "high-end" accommodations in Washington's island destinations for [WATERWAYS](#), a luxury lifestyle magazine in Greater Austin, TX with readership of 40,000. The story that will appear in spring 2023 issue will feature Bainbridge, San Juan and Whidbey Islands.
- **Travel + Leisure** – feature story slated for the 2023 editorial calendar (print) pending Sara Franklin's visit this month.
- Travel writer Geoff Nudelman, is pitching stories to several national outlets including **Bicycling** and **Askmen.com**, stories focused on sustainable businesses and travel.
- **Life's Incredible Journey**, coverage from Wendy Nordvick-Carr anticipated to cover solo, couple, and multigenerational travel on her blog and social channels.

**Press Highlights** include 10 pieces of coverage with an estimated 784K impressions. To view the coverage in full go [here](#).

## COMPUTERPIX

### **Digital Report for November 2022**

#### Analytics

Analysis continues with processing the answers from the online Regenerative Tourism survey that closed on 10/31/22. More than 700 people responded to the survey. Because all of the questions were open-ended, it is taking some time to analyze the several thousand answers into charts and graphs that can be used by stakeholders to make informed decisions. We may not hit the 11/30/2022 deadline, but we will be close. We supplied the Langley Chamber with a report on which Seattle Area Zip Codes visited the area and stayed overnight. We'd be happy to supply a similar report to any other chamber who requests it.

#### AirBNBust?

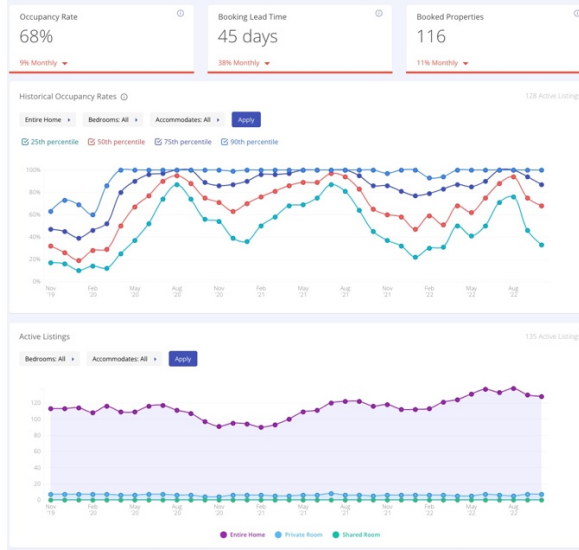
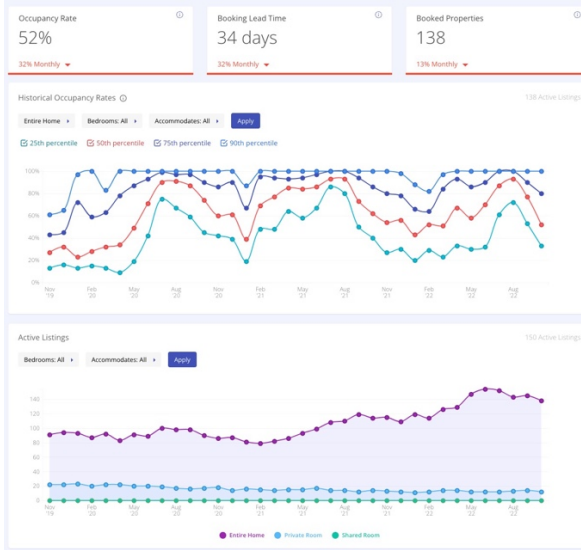
There were a couple of stories in the media these past few weeks speculating that the popularity of short-term home rentals is fading. Here's are two:

- <https://time.com/6223185/airbnbs-empty-short-term-rentals/>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/travel/2022/11/14/airbnb-airbnbust-hosts-fees-chores/>

Naturally, we wondered if that was happening on Whidbey and Camano Islands. We used AirDNA to view each Zip Code for the Islands. These are screen captures of the overview page for each Zip Code. Taken together, it appears in just the last couple of months there's been a slight downturn in occupancy, but mostly in the moderately priced categories (50<sup>th</sup> percentile & 75<sup>th</sup> percentile).

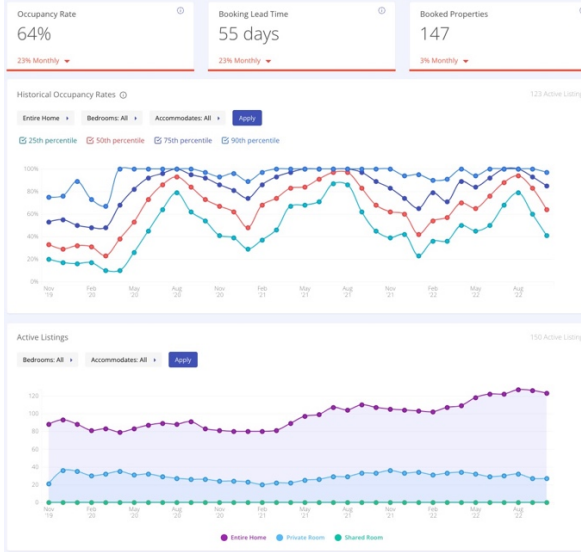
Camano

Clinton

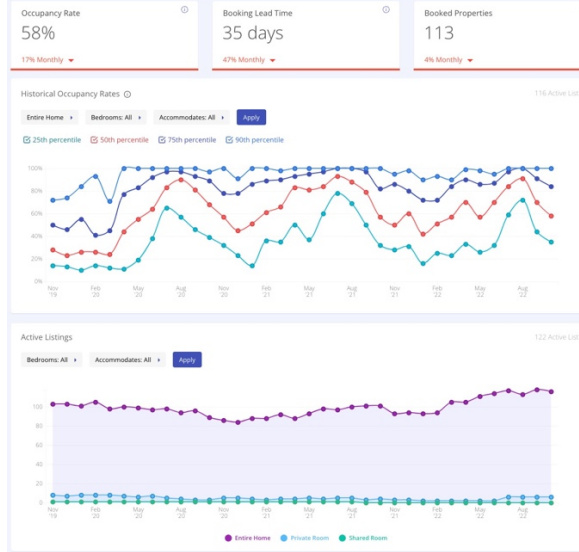




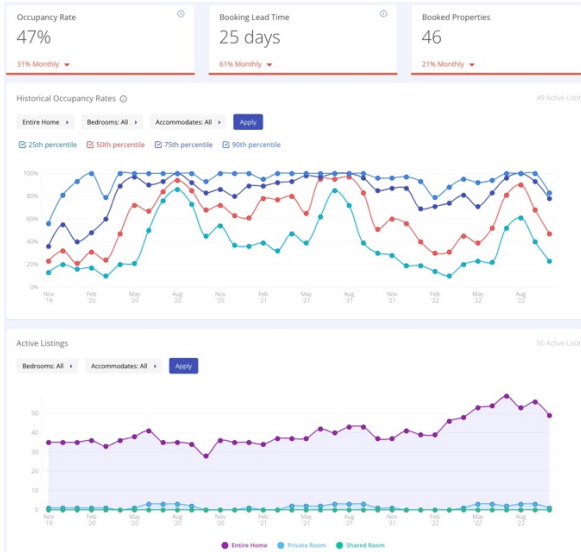
## Coupeville



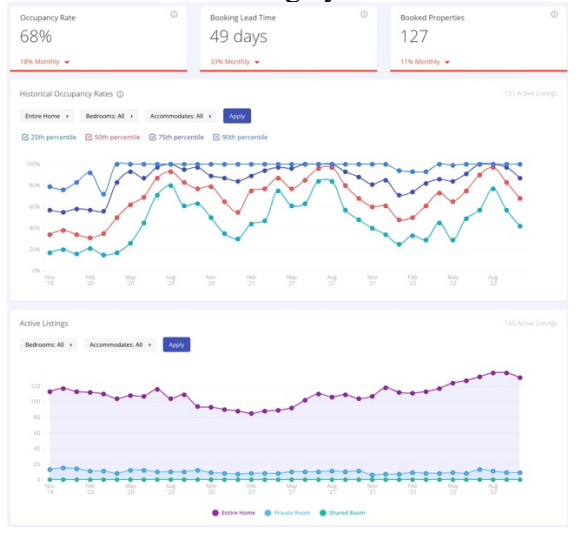
## Freeland



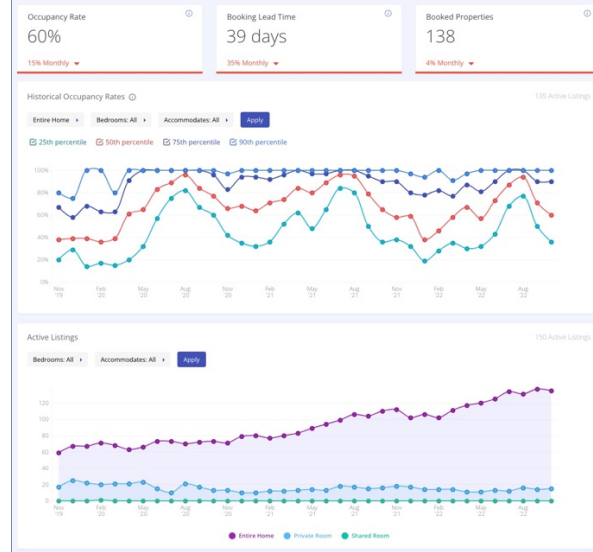
## Greenbank



## Langley



## Oak Harbor



## Website

### Content

- ***Holiday Page***  
With the pandemic no longer interrupting celebrations, we've resumed our holiday page, attempting to list as many related events as possible. Please, if you find that we've overlooked something, let us know. <https://whidbeycamanoislands.com/holiday-events-performances-and-shopping/>
- ***New Posts***  
Walking in Winter - <https://whidbeycamanoislands.com/want-a-happy-hike-walk-in-winter/>  
Skip the Traffic and Ferry Line - <https://whidbeycamanoislands.com/skip-the-traffic-and-ferry-line-to-whidbey-island/>  
A 3<sup>rd</sup> post about Whidbey Island being highly ranked by a popular travel website, should be posted the week of November 28<sup>th</sup>.

### Technical End

#### ***Events Calendar***

- We use the WordPress Plug-In "The Events Calendar" for our events calendar. The newest version will allow us to group related events, making things like the above-noted holiday page much easier and cheaper to create.

### Speed

- We've upgraded the service with Cloudways, our website host. We've switched to new servers using higher-speed processors and the latest design of hard drive servers.

## Newsletter

- The December newsletter is scheduled to go out Monday, November 28<sup>th</sup>. It features the holiday events as the main story.

### **8. Chamber Round Table:**

- a. Jessica reported her time is spent getting ready for NW Glassquest. Magi reported on the new Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce website and would welcome everyone to review and provide feedback to her. She is actively revamping their newsletter too. Oak Harbor Main Street has lots of Christmas activities beginning December 3. Coupeville Chamber of Commerce also hosts Christmas activities on December 3. They include a boat lights parade and a parade with floats down Main Street. Marie, with Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve gave an update about a dessert potluck on Friday, December 9 at the PNW Art School. January 19, 2023 there will be an open house for Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve for those that live on Whidbey Island. There are also two workshops for the community. In November 2023 there will be a 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. Langley also shares they are having a holly jolly parade on December 3. They recently ran a campaign to shop and stay with local lodging that was inline with some of the transformational travel tenants. The chamber is also looking at creating events that are over a multiple day spread. The Langley Chamber received a grant to refresh the kiosk on 525. If you have any ideas, please contact Inge. Clinton chamber is hosting a tree lighting and a market on December 3, which will include a model train demonstration. Freeland Chamber of Commerce shared their past year was not as productive with their events as they would have liked. Consequently, they are working on annual permitting with the county that would be more consistent. They also are planning a golf retreat. Chet is on the lookout for a fireworks barge for their July 3 event in 2023.

### **9. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 12:33pm.

Next regular meeting is Thursday, January 5, 2023, Zoom.

Meeting minutes recorded by Robyn Myers and reviewed by Jessica McCready