

**Meeting Minutes
Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism of Island County
February 2, 2023
Zoom**

Quorum: x=members present

Mayor Scott Chaplin X Craig Cyr	Com. Melanie Bacon X	Jackie Henderson X
Alannah Johansen	Gregg Lanza X	OH Lodging- Vacant
Maggie Bailey X	Max Lindsay-Thorsen	Tom Felvey X
Christina Swan X Katie Grindon X (only 1 votes)	Jessica McCready X	Chet Ross X
Magi Aguilar X	Inge Morascini X	Sharon Sappington, EDC X
Lynda Eccles X	Robyn Myers X	Jim Woessner X

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
 David Price, Langley Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
 Marie Shimada, Reserve Manager, Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve
 Melinda Erickson, VP, Coupeville Festival Association

Meeting called to order at 11:02 am by Chair, Melanie Bacon.

1. **Public Comment (3 minutes limit)**- No comment was given.
2. **Adoption of Agenda** – Jessica M. motioned, and Lynda E. seconded to accept the agenda. Approved with no objections.
3. **Approval of January 5, 2023 Minutes** -Robyn submitted a change in the public comment from Amy Bush, regarding the new location of the Camano Arts Association. It should not read the Freedom building, and is corrected to read the Camano Gateway building at Freedom Park. Maggie B motioned to approve amended minutes and Lynda E seconded to approve the minutes. Approved with no objections.
4. **Treasurer's Report and Invoice review** – Dianne presented the Treasurer's Report. Katie G. inquired about the social spending. Sherrye answered the general question and directed anyone to check out the budget detailed narrative from the November minutes, 2022. There were no further questions or objections to the invoices or budget spending for the year.
5. **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. Chet fired the legal counsel and there

are no plans to hire a replacement until the new officers have the opportunity to review the results of the state audit and to discuss what the next steps should be for the organization. Melanie is sending Jackie communications from the state auditor.

6. New Business:

a. Management Committee Report- Melanie reported that the interest from our holdings was not rolling into our account but has been distributed to the Island County General Fund. She is looking into how it can be put into our Tourism fund.

b. 2023 Election of Officers –This was done by email ballot prior to the meeting, but the results were:

- Jackie Henderson- Chair
- Inge Morascini- Vice Chair
- Lynda Eccles- Secretary
- Scott Chaplin - Treasurer

Ballot voting is seen below as provided by Scott Chaplin:

Island County Tourism Committee JAB 2023 Executive Board Election

Voting Member Name	Organization	Chair			Vice Chair			Secretary			Treasurer			
		Jackie Henderson	None	Write in:	Chet Ross	Inge Morascini	None	Write in	Lynda Eccles	None	Write in	Scott Chaplin	None	Write in
1 Magi Aguilar	Oak Harbor Chamber	✓							✓			✓		
2 Melanie Bacon	County Commissioner Dist 1	✓			✓				✓			✓		
3 Maggie Bailey	Coupeville Lodging	✓				✓			✓			✓		
4 Scott Chaplin	Langley Elected Official, Mayor	✓				✓			✓			✓		
5 Lynda Eccles	Coupeville Chamber of Commerce	✓				✓			✓			✓		
6 Tom Felvey *	Langley Lodging	✓				✓			✓			✓		
7 Jackie Henderson	Coupeville elected official- City Council	✓				✓			✓			✓		
8 Alannah Johansen	Camano Island Lodging	✓				✓			✓			✓		
9 Gregg Lanza	Unic Lodging, North Whidbey	✓			✓				✓			✓		
10 Max Lindsay-Thorsen	Unincorporated Lodging South Whidbey	✓				✓			✓			✓		
11 Jessica McCready	Camano Island Chamber	✓			✓				✓			✓		
12 Inge Morascini	Langley Chamber	✓				✓			✓			✓		
13 Robyn Myers	Unic Lodging Central Whidbey	✓			✓				✓			✓		
14 Chet Ross	Freeland Chamber of Commerce	✓			✓				✓			✓		
15 Christina Swan	Clinton Chamber of Commerce	X				X			X			X		
16 Tim Woessner	Oak Harbor elected official- City Council													
17 Vacant	Oak Harbor Lodging													
		TOTALS												

* had sent ballot to himself 1/24 4:32 pm

$\frac{16}{17} = 94\%$ voter participation

Lynda Eccles moved and Inge Morascini seconded to validate the election results. The motion was unanimously passed.

c. PR Media Report:

Sherrye discussed the proposal to continue working with the Transformational Travel Council in 2023, to help with the roll out of the implementation of the next phase. This falls in line with our strategic goals. State of Washington Tourism has requested that she deliver testimony before the Senate Ways and Means Committee on Monday at 4 p.m. to support increasing state tourism funding. Sherrye is exploring the possibility of submitting a grant request to the Port of Seattle to request funding for a Datafy campaign that aligns with our regenerative goals and promotes our online 24 Trails off the Beaten Path work and TREAD Map App. The deadline is fast approaching and the grants are very competitive.

SHERRYE WYATT PUBLIC RELATIONS & WRITING

Regenerative Places Program and Misc.

We've been working closely with our Transformational Travel Council facilitators and Steering Committee and are nearly done with the first draft of the plan. Next online gathering is March 15 at 10 a.m. PST. Creative Team members met with Chamber directors in January to review plans for the Regenerative Guide being created this year to serve as a new communications tool. Recently signed contracts include map distribution with Certified Folder for 2023 and advertising with SIP Northwest including digital, print, and sponsored content.

Travefy

State of Washington Tourism is offering Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism a trial membership in this new itinerary planning platform. In January, our Creative Team participated in a state demo and will be creating our own Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism profile. The program includes an app to download, and we can collaborate with other entities such as the San Juan Islands and Port of Seattle when co-creating statewide itineraries.

[Itinerary Management For Travel Professionals | Travefy](#)

International VIP Delegations

The State of Washington Tourism and Port of Seattle have asked Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism to coordinate and partially host two delegations in March. The first is 9 people on March 4-5 who were chosen to participate in a "post conference FAM trip" following the Go West Summit this year in Anchorage, AK ([Go West Summit | Business-to-business Tourism Convention](#)). Arrive from Bellingham on March 4 at Deception Pass and depart from Coupeville on March 5. Go West Summit brings international travel buyers, media and destinations together, similar to IPW which we've attended in the past. This year IPW is in San Antonio, TX ([Bringing the World to America | IPW](#)) The second delegation is 17 people and they are all international travel buyers for the German market. Arrive March 13 from Bellingham and depart

from Coupeville on March 14. Since we are not attending these conferences this year, we are fortunate to have opportunities to share our county with these delegations.

State of Washington Tourism Legislation and Tourism Day

Legislation to increase tourism funding is moving along smoothly. Sherrye was asked by State of Washington Tourism to testify during hearings. **Background:** In 2018, SWT relied on tourism stakeholders to pass a bill that funded \$1.5 million a year to re-build the statewide tourism program. Some federal relief funds and the ongoing commitment of cash and in-kind support from Washington's tourism industry has allowed that. The proviso money is set to sunset this coming June. Without this consistent funding, SWT's ability to create impactful programming across initiatives will be severely hampered. In the 2023 session, House Bill 1258 and Senate Bill 5465 request an annual \$13 million operational baseline for SWT and adjustment of the industry match from 2:1 to 1:1. This will allow SWT to operate statewide and year-round, and help Washington be more competitive with neighboring states and provinces that have much larger budgets. [State-Tourism-Request-Fact-Sheet-2023-Final.pdf \(stateofwatourism.com\)](https://stateofwatourism.com/State-Tourism-Request-Fact-Sheet-2023-Final.pdf) Tourism industry supporters may wish to sign up as a tourism advocate, and consider joining the in-person Tourism Day on March 14 in Olympia. This is not a virtual event. Registration is open now. [Become a Tourism Advocate - State of Washington Tourism \(stateofwatourism.com\)](https://stateofwatourism.com/Become-a-Tourism-Advocate-State-of-Washington-Tourism).

OSBORNE NORTHWEST PUBLIC RELATIONS

Monthly Overview

Project Management

- Conducted a site tour on January 23rd to research lodging options, downtown Oak Harbor and other areas of interest for upcoming itineraries.
- Participated in team and community meetings focused on the final document detailing the regenerative tourism launch, as well as the forthcoming guide focusing on content that aligns with the new focus.
- Developed messaging and story lines to guide content plans for early 2023.

Topics included:

- Try this Kind of Travel: 10 Transformational Experiences
- Try These Trails: Find Spring Blooms, Preserve and Protect the Garry Oaks or Bring on the Birds
- Taste and See: Iconic Penn Cove Mussels
- Beyond the Canvas: Get to Know these Camano Island Artists
- Story pitches generated early interest and shaped itineraries from the following writers, which whom we will collaborate with on stories within the next three months.

Upcoming Story Collaborations:

- March 2-5; Carrie Honaker: freelance writer covering ethical, sustainable travel for publications such as Bon Appetit, Condé Nast Traveler, Food & Wine Magazine, and more.
- February 19-20, Gayle Picken, Daytrips in WA, will visit Northwest Glass Quest to document her experience with the event, as well as trails, dining, lodging for the trip on social channels and her blog.
- March 24-25, Molly Amber with Seattleite is planning an Oak Harbor itinerary to attend the Oak Harbor Wine Bites & Brews event and to highlight the Auld Holland Inn's Windmill Suite.
- March 25, MaryRose Denton, is interested in visiting during the Oak Harbor Wine Bites & Brews, in addition to exploring a profile of the Organic Farm School for her outlets, which include Well & Good, Seattle Refined and NW Tasting Room.
- Spring TBD, Jayson Moorman, a content creator and blogger from Portland covering slow travel, stewardship. We' are considering a collaboration to gather content (photos and videos) as it relates to our trails as well as lifestyle amenities (shopping, dining, lodging) that align.

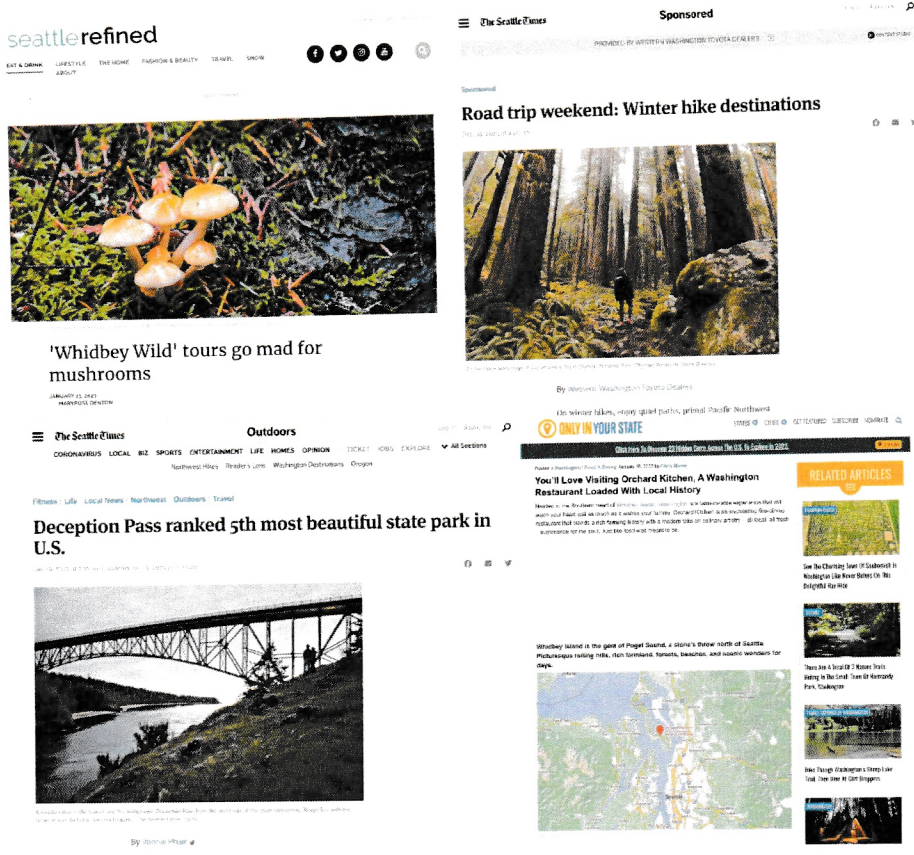
Instagram Engagement

- 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 2,515 on December 21 to 2,537 on January 24, a growth rate of .87%.

Pending Press

- **Travel + Leisure** – feature story slated for the 2023 editorial calendar (print) pending Sara Franklin's visit this month.
- **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 12 pieces of coverage with an estimated 25.3 million impressions. To view the coverage in full go [here](#).



COMPUTERPIX

Digital Report for January 2023

Executive Summary

- Data show that January is a planning month for tourists. Google Analytics show that there was a 50.24% larger number of visitors landing on the tourism lodging page in January 2022, than in July 2022.
- The number of website referrals to lodging booking pages is up strongly from prior years.
- Out-of-State visitors in 2022 were up substantially, with a total of 2.5 million visitor days, up nearly 18% from 2021.
- Visitor demographics show a relatively wealthy, but overwhelmingly white visitors
- Email open rate has been greater than 30% for the past two months.

January is Planning Month

A review of Google Analytics landing pages shows July is much busier than January. This is as one would assume. January is a quiet time and July is prime tourist season. Amazingly, this is true of all landing pages except lodging where there is a flip. July 1, 2022 to July 31, 2022 shows 39,782 impressions. January 1, 2022 to January 31, 2022 shows 59,768 impressions with site visitors

spending an average of 3:31 minutes on the lodging landing page. Both date ranges show a significantly high bounce rate (visitors come to the lodging landing page, do whatever they do, and leave the tourism website) of 33.04% and 40.88% respectively.

Secondary dimension

Q advanced

Landing Page	Acquisition					Behavior		Conversions Goal1 Lodging		
	Impressions	Clicks	CTR	Average Position	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Lodging (Goal 1 Completions)	Lodging (Goal 1 Value)	Lodging (Goal 1 Conversion Rate)
3. /lodging/										
Jan 1, 2022 - Jan 31, 2022	59,768 (8.46%)	95 (0.73%)	0.16%	4.7	112 (8.0%)	33.04%	3.31	112 (35.94%)	\$1,120.00 (35.94%)	100.00%
Jul 1, 2022 - Jul 31, 2022	39,782 (2.16%)	116 (0.12%)	0.29%	7.7	137 (8.5%)	40.88%	2.83	137 (25.19%)	\$1,370.00 (25.19%)	100.00%
% Change	50.24%	-18.10%	-45.49%	-39.76%	-18.25%	-19.18%	16.96%	-18.25%	-18.25%	0.00%

Stop Hibernating



New York Times (1/9/2023)

Toward that end, we have been engaged in a decidedly unglamorous re-check and clean-up of various parts of the tourism website. For example, we re-wrote a multi-day food-based itinerary, removing closed businesses and adding new ones. In another example, pages that referred to workshops and art schools in the county were re-written and combined.

Data

Book-Direct

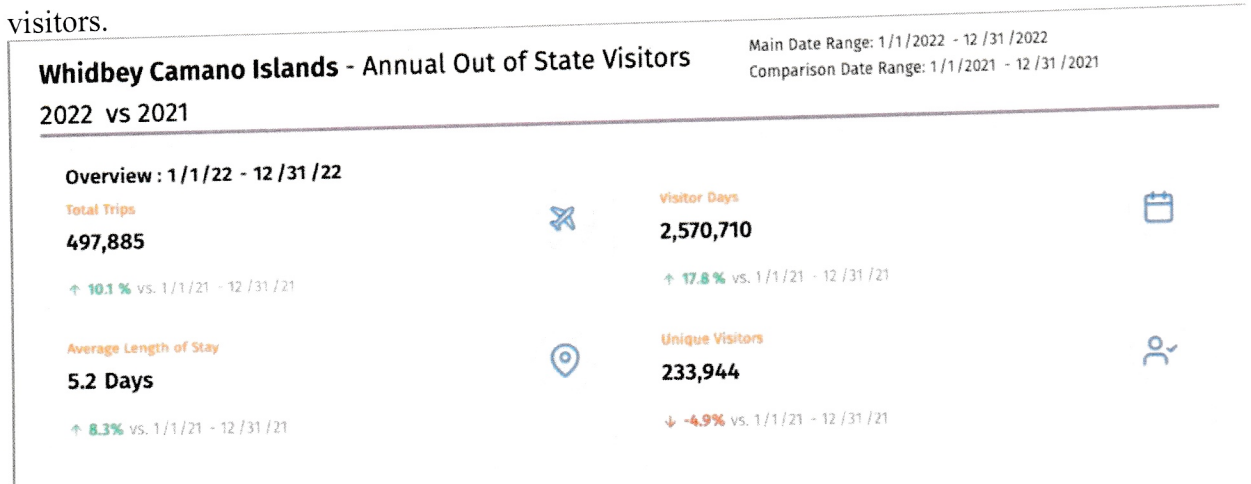
The number of referrals by the website to lodging booking pages is substantially higher than in previous years, almost as much as the previous three years combined. It would be a gross understatement to say that this indicates a stronger interest in visiting here than in years past.

	January 1 – January 26
2023	1266
2022	511
2021	429
2020	383

Out of State Visitors

2022 visitation by people from out-of-state were much higher than in 2021. 2,570,710 visitor days were registered by Datafy in 2022 up 17.8% from 2021.

Importantly, the average number of days stayed by a visitor increased to 5.2 days, up 8.3%. This is despite the number of unique visitors dropping nearly 5%. It appears to mean that people are staying longer, which has long been a goal of this committee. Note: Datafy considers visitor days to be a much better indication of the impact of visitors than simply counting the number of unique visitors.



Demographics 2022 & 2021

Demographic information from Datafy shows several important distinctions about visitors to Island County. In 2022:

- 65.7% make more than \$75,000 a year
- 61% are over 45 years old
- 86.6% are white
- 42.5% are at least college graduates

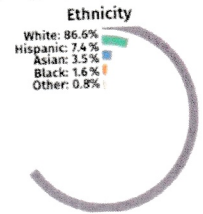
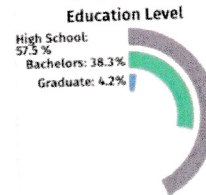
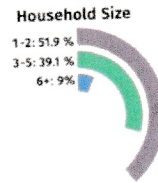
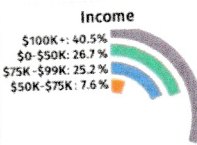
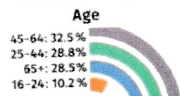
These figures show both some successes and some challenges. The low rate of non-white visitors shows that we should find appropriate channels for outreach and use them. The large number for relatively well-off visitors shows we have visitors here who likely have discretionary money and *would pay a premium for programs that are regenerative in nature.*

Whidbey Camano Islands - Annual Visitors 2022 vs 2021

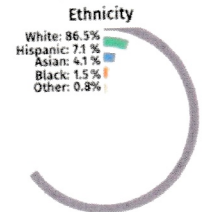
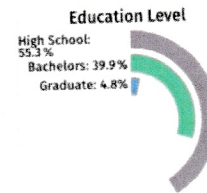
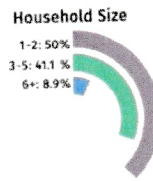
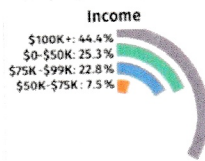
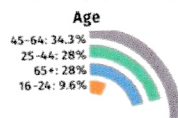
Main Date Range: 1/1/2022 - 12/31/2022

Comparison Date Range: 1/1/2021 - 12/31/2021

Demographics for 1/1/22 - 12/31/22



Demographics for 1/1/21 - 12/31/21



Email

Here's an update on the most recent emails:

Feb <https://us12.campaign-archive.com/?u=11380ced8373e34392577e79b&id=6e810cc245>

The February email was delivered successfully to 19.6K subscribers with an open rate of 34.2%. The typical open rate for our industry, as reported by our email deliver service, Mailchimp, is 25.3%.

Jan <https://us12.campaign-archive.com/?u=11380ced8373e34392577e79b&id=69f5faaadd>

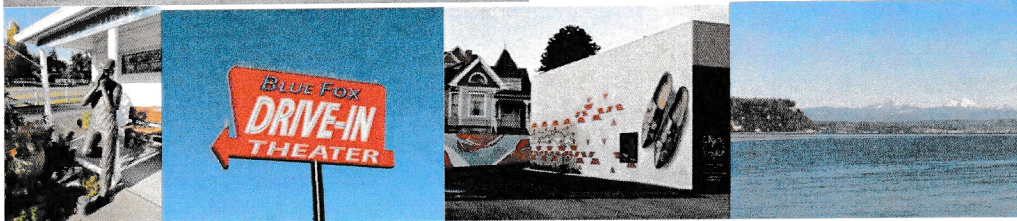
The January email was delivered successfully to 19.8K subscribers open rate was 38.3%.

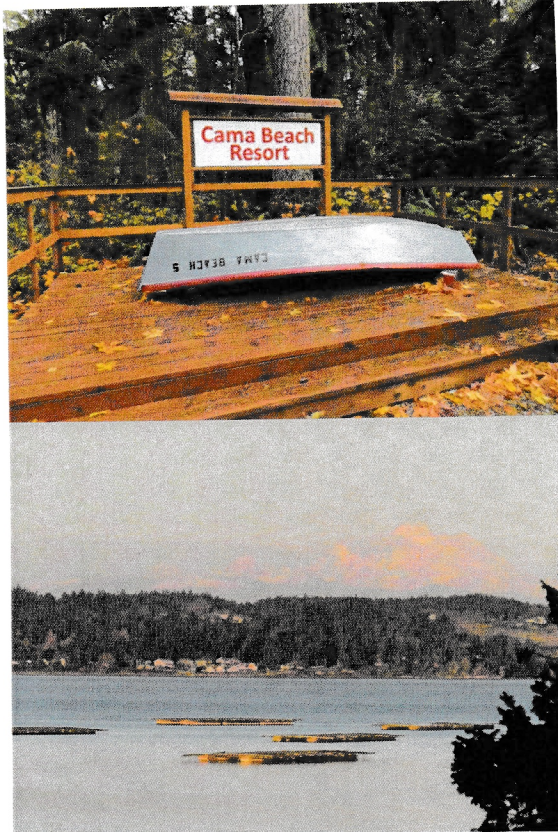
LAURA HILTON

Laura has been sifting through and categorizing 1000+ photos shot on both islands over the winter. Some of these were needed for the website and many will live on the Simpleview platform to be available in WCIT's photo asset library. Others are to call upon as potential film locations when producers are looking for images in a hurry. Laura will continue to grow this collection in the Spring.

Along with the rest of the Creative Team, Laura has been working to finalize the Regenerative plan, as well as develop the articles and style of the upcoming countywide Regenerative guide. Entries for the Culture and Heritage guide are also being discussed, and Laura will be writing these stories. Laura has also written a story for *Welcome Magazine*.

As always, Laura has worked to stay abreast of travel trends and film news within our region and beyond. Research is ongoing for the best ways to develop our film practices and make resources easily accessible.





ROSENKRANZ PRODUCTIONS

Rosenkranz Productions is currently working on 4 major projects.

1. Rebranding
 1. Research into current marketplace and other destination case studies.
 2. Exploring potential themes, concepts and design sketches.
 3. Discussions of possible themes and concepts with the creative team.
2. New Marketing Campaign
 1. In conjunction with the brand work listed above, we are exploring campaign concepts that would tie directly to those possible new brand directions.
 3. Regenerative Guide
 1. Initial job research and information gathering.
 2. Video meeting with stakeholders and creative team.
 3. Development of layout map for guide—a breakdown of spreads for chamber regenerative content and regenerative articles.
 4. Development of a content template to specify what the chambers should be looking to gather.
 4. Culture & Heritage Guide.
 1. Working with the creative team, especially Laura Hilton, to finalize the list of sites and attractions to be included, and possibilities for collaborators and partners.

Rosenkranz Productions contracted work this month has also included:

1. Design and text review of the 54+/- page Regenerative Places Action Plan for digital and possibly print delivery.
 - Completed designs of Action Plan graphics and charts.
2. Design concepts for the WCIT Annual report.
3. Website and e-blast review and feedback to ComputerPix.
4. WCIT Committee meetings.
5. WCIT Creative Team meetings.
6. Regenerative Places / TTC meetings.
7. IFWTWA ad.
8. Sound Publishing banner ads.
9. Regenerative Places PPT design.
10. Datafy banner ad designs.

7. Chamber Round Table:

- a. County Update: Melanie Bacon- Commissioner Bacon spoke about a couple of grant awards announced this week: the Whidbey Camano Land Trust received \$1M for their Keystone Forest and Farm Acquisition project, and the IRTPO received \$403,200 to plan their Safe Street For All project. Both of these projects will enhance the Island County experience for residents and tourists.
- b. Jack Penland reported on an upcoming advertising campaign using Datafy's targeting technology. The campaign will target regional hikers who stay overnight but haven't hiked Camano or Whidbey Islands recently. The campaign begins February 15 and runs through April 15. Oak Harbor councilman Jim Woessner suggested that tourism could be in a position to supply data to all the events in the County. Jack agreed this would be a good idea.
- c. Glass Quest is 2/17-2/26 and we are excited to introduce our Kind Quester concept. More info. can be found online: www.northwestglassquest.com Chamber is seeing an unsolicited increase in membership - which is great! New Camano Island Map just went to print 15K copies will be in hand by Glass Quest. Our BOD will be working strategically on a Land Acknowledgement statement and detailed history page on our website to reflect the interesting history of Camano Island
- d. Marie Shimada with Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve reported they are working on a federal grant request for historic revitalization of historic structures within the Reserve. If awarded, the funds would be administered via a competitive subgrant program. Ebey's Reserve (Marie) is taking the lead on planning the Whidbey Island launch event for the Maritime WA National Heritage Area. This event will be slated for April, and the first phase will be invite-only.
- e. Freeland will not have a golf tournament in 2023 as Useless Bay Golf and Country club does not have compatible dates for our tournament. We will have an antique car show in the parking lot of Nichols Bros. shipyard. Date

to be determined. The 3rd of July fireworks is still being worked on primarily because the costs have risen 38%.

8. **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 12:43pm.

Next regular meeting is Thursday, March 2, 2023, location yet TBD.

Meeting minutes recorded by Robyn Myers and reviewed by Jessica McCready