



**Embrace Whidbey & Camano Islands
Board Meeting Minutes
February 1, 2024 – 11:00 a.m.
Coupeville Library and Virtual Via Zoom**

Committee Members

Jackie Henderson, Town of Coupeville, Chair
Inge Morascini, Langley Chamber, Vice Chair
Lynda Eccles, Coupeville Chamber, Secretary
Angela Muniz, Freeland Chamber
Bryan Stucky, Oak Harbor City Council
Magi Aguilar, Oak Harbor Chamber
Sharon Sappington, Economic
Development Council
Katie Grindon, Clinton Chamber
Max Lindsay-Thorsen, Unincorporated S. Whidbey Lodging
Gregg Lanza, North Whidbey Lodging
Tom Felvey, City of Langley Lodging
Aly Willis, Unincorporated Central Whidbey Lodging
Jessica McCready, Camano Island Chamber

Creative Team

Scott Rosenkranz, Embrace Graphic Design/Branding
Jack Penland, Embrace Digital Marketing/Website/Data/Content Creation
Krista Loecher, Embrace Regenerative Places Program
Laura Hilton, Film Liaison/Special Projects
Diane Binder – Bookkeeping

Guests: Jennifer Novak CEDS Consultant via zoom
Marie Shimada, Manager, Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve

Call to Order

Chair Jackie Henderson called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m. and established that there was a quorum. Jackie then welcomed Guests.

Adoption of Agenda

Chair Jackie Henderson asked if there were any changes or additions to the February 1 2024 agenda. There were none, so the agenda was approved.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Chair Jackie Henderson asked if there were any changes to the January 4, 2024 meeting minutes. There were none, so the meeting minutes were approved.

Public Comment

Chair Jackie Henderson asked if there was anyone from the public present who wished to make a comment. No one responded.

Approval of Invoices

Diane Binder presented February Invoices for payment totaling \$41,659.36, also Budget vs. Actual report as of February 26, 2024 showing February Expenses at \$102,170.31 which is 11.4% of the 2024 annual budget.

Chair Jackie Henderson asked if there were any questions on the invoices as presented. Diane Binder moved to approve the invoices as presented, Lynda Eccles seconded the motion. The board approved and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Diane Binder presented the Treasurer's report and noted that the State had not provided 2024 January totals. Total Vouchers for as of 12/31/2023 totaled-\$872,084.64. Income less expenses for 2024 funding \$1,029,391.19,238.88. Total Tax Revenue income reported by County \$8,196,709.24. Lodging Year over Year showed that the county as a whole is down 6.5%.

Business Report

Chair Jackie Henderson provided updates on the following:

- Jackie announced that the Mayor of Langley will be joining the tourism board and requested a letter of appointment from the Langley Town Council.
- Election of Officers – the Board unanimously approved the following Officers for 2024:

Jackie Henderson, Chair

Bryan Stucky, Vice Chair

Lynda Eccles, Secretary

Greg Lanza, Treasurer

Commissioner to the Board for 2024 will be Jill Johnson

Maggie Aguilar made a motion to accept the 2024 Board of Officers as presented, Sharon Sappington seconded and the motion to accept the 2024 Slate of Officers passed unanimously.

- Jackie announced that Inga Morascini was hired as the new PR & Marketing Manager for Island County Tourism. Lynda Eccles made a motion to approve the hiring of Inge Morascini as the PR & Marketing Manager for Island County Tourism, Greg Lanza seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Creative Team

Jack Penland will send out a full report to the Board for the March meeting.

Scott Rosenkrantz – The Cultural Heritage guide is with the printer and distribution should be late March.

Laura Hilton reported that she is working with WA. Film Works on a Poster “Your Property Could be a Movie Location!”

Chamber Roundtable Reports

- Oak Harbor: - Working on the upcoming Chamber Luncheon and Awards Banquet
- Coupeville: Working on Chocolate Walk on February 10th, 2024 Marketing Plan, Annual Report and Business Awards Dinner (date to be determined) Coupeville Historic Waterfront Association is busy with MusselFest planning March 2 & 3.
- Langley: Inge is working on Mystery Weekend in March “Silence of the Mine”. Langley Creates applied for a grant for the Outdoor Heritage Museum.
- Camano: Jessica is in the process of planning the 2024 Glass Quest to be held in February.
- Oak Harbor Main Street: Greg said they are working on their annual Wine, Bites and Brews and finalizing plans for Serendipity Lane.
- Lodging – Tom Felvey announced upcoming Film Festival at WICA

Next Meeting

Next meeting is March 7, 2024 at 11 a.m. at the Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce. Reminder, all future Board Meetings will be at the Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce except the May 2nd meeting which will be on Camano Island. All future meetings will have the virtual capability.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

Minutes submitted by

Lynda Eccles

Secretary, Embrace Whidbey and Camano Islands

Island Exposures:

A snapshot of all the ways we are reaching out to our audiences

Marketing Director

The yeoman's work of building a framework for our brand direction of Embrace has been laid. The task before us is communicating that message, both inwardly and to our prospective visitor. (continued on p. 2)

Film Liaison/Special Projects

An exciting month of bridge-building between local creatives and screen opportunities. There is much filmmaking activity happening already, so a busy year is likely ahead. New copy being written for digital guide rollout. (continued on p. 2)

Public Relations

EWCIT met with top travel writers from around the world at International Media Marketplace, securing opportunities for collaboration. ON PR been working to secure coverage for key events, including Glass Quest, Sound University, Penn Cove Water Festival and more. (continued on p. 3)

Creative Services

Culture and Heritage guide is scheduled to be on press next week! Work on marketing plan continues with team. (continued on p. 4)

Regenerative Coordinator

Great month of digging in with the creative team, representing Embrace at my first public event, and starting a listening tour. Also crafting a new 'Cliff Notes' users guide to regenerative tourism. (continued on p. 4)

Digital Marketing

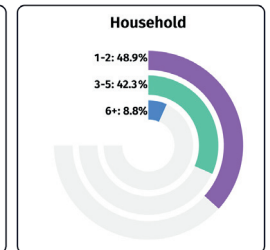
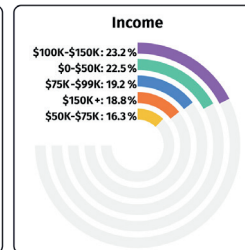
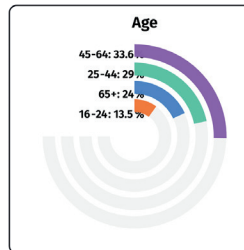
Visitors here who spend 2 or more days tend to be affluent, older, and white. Seattle visitors have the greatest impact on South Whidbey. (continued on p. 5)



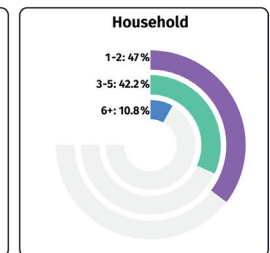
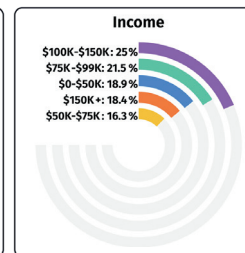
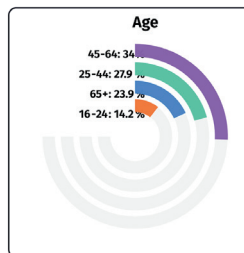
Scan this code for full reports

whidbeycamanoislands.com/meetings-on-whidbey-and-camano-islands

Whidbey



Camano



Fresh Datafy Information

ComputerPIX - New information from Datafy is giving us a clearer look at who visits Island County and where they are coming from.

Demographic information from Datafy shows that very generally speaking, (see above graphic) our visitors are affluent (around 40% make more than \$100K), older (nearly one-quarter over 65), and white (around 85%).

By dividing the data up by destination, we are seeing some shifts, both in demographics and geography. Most notably, Seattle's share of visitors drops noticeably the further north you travel on Whidbey Island. Additionally, the North Sound plays a greater role in overnight visitation than previously thought.

(Continued on page 5)

Sound Waters University 2024:

A Tale of Two Events

Sound Waters University 2024 was a pivotal and landmark event for Sound Waters Stewards as the 30th anniversary event, the first ever in-person SWU with a Zoom option, the first ever in-person SWU with field trips, and the first in-person SWU since the COVID-19 pandemic.

The day began with introductions and thanking the sponsors, including Embrace. Our poster was unfortunately not raised in time for the keynote, but was up and visible for the remainder of the programming. There were approximately a dozen informational tables and Embrace was given the choice spot close to the coffee and

(Continued on page 5)





Marketing Director

Inge Morascini

Embrace brand takes shape.

Our direction with Embrace, is one of niche marketing, as opposed to general marketing. It requires that the message and the audience be narrowly defined and that we have a clear message and a granular understanding of our audience. That is where we begin as we start the journey of putting the Embrace brand into play.

Beginning with the Embrace manifesto and pillars as our guide, we are reobserving ourselves, in words and images, by demographics and psychographics, to facilitate defining our market.

Through statistical information, the use of surveys, interviews, and through acquisition of additional information from markets currently involved in Regenerative Tourism, we will build a profile of our target. The target audience may not be one archetype...often audiences represent several distinct groups.

This work will culminate in a strategic marketing plan. The plan will inform what we say, what images we use, who we use to speak for us and where we show up. By curating our audience, we meet the objective of our manifesto. We will continue to reap the rewards of tourism, so important to our islands, while inviting the people that best match our values.

This work will continue as "the train is moving," so to speak. Our cultural and heritage guide is a great tool, not only to have the audience understand who we are, but to remind ourselves of our rich heritage and what we have to share. It will be featured in several print ads, on our website and in our PR efforts.

As we build the plan, we are engaging our internal audience as well. Krista's work, as a liaison for Embrace, will develop strategies of how we, together, can build something that both residents and visitors can benefit from. One of those exciting avenues is developing opportunities for visitors to "rub elbows" with the community, whether that's through integration with a non-profit or taking advantage of a business's "experiences" offering. Our intent is to encourage more of these kinds of opportunities and to build a portfolio that we can communicate to our defined audience.

We are also working towards several defined goals, like inclusivity and diversity, through our PR efforts. Erin's group is actively seeking out new voices, which will expand our audience, as we reach groups we haven't spoken to in the past. This will help us build our photo assets as well.

Your participation is sought and welcome in this process. As residents you represent the voice of the islands. As business-people, you know your customers. We look forward to working together to putting the Embrace brand into action.



Film Liaison/Special Projects Support

Laura Hilton

This month was an exciting time of connecting with local creatives. Laura collected the contact details from 24 actors at a recent open audition, and through correspondence with all of them has received background info, resumes, and headshots for a growing database of local talent. Additional local actors and potential crew have reached out to Laura, and she was able to connect one with an on-screen speaking role. The filmmaker was thrilled to find a good fit for her story, and the local actor was thrilled with the acting opportunity and a chance to expand her reel. Laura was able to make other local introductions between island creatives as well and is excited for the opportunity to do this bridge-building.

Laura has been in close contact with Washington Filmworks, attending info sessions on workforce funding initiatives and the Small Budget Production Initiative, as well as writing to our district representatives in support of Film Day 2024. Laura has been asked by Washington Filmworks to be a speaker at the next quarterly meeting for Regional Film Liaisons about her outreach efforts, and plans to publicly thank the Embrace committee for allowing her to foster our community's reputation as a film friendly destination. Laura appreciates the recent contact from committee members and meeting guests about their interest in listing property on the Reel Scout locations database and encourages others to do the same.

Contact from filmmakers this month included a Seattle-based documentary maker creating a short about Glass Quest, an Oak Harbor-based cinematographer seeking to create a new island-focused web series, a student filmmaker creating a documentary about Southern Resident Orcas, and ongoing communication with the Freeland-based filmmaker shooting a narrative short film this Spring. Opportunities to collaborate have been suggested on some of these projects that would be beneficial to tourism, and Laura will update the committee further on those opportunities next month when options are more solidified. Laura also captured stills from a locally filmed movie to accompany a new blog post and additions to the SetJetters app, highlighting film tourism.



Your Property Could be a Movie Location!

Washington State has expanded funding for film production, and we expect to see many productions filmed here in the coming years. Want to get in on the action? Consider listing your property on the Reel Scout Locations Database, where Washington Filmworks staff can put together images for film clients. There is no commitment to participate in a film production by listing your property. It simply creates the possibility!

Scan to list your property here. Or visit: [washingtonfilmworks.org/locations/list-your-property](https://www.washingtonfilmworks.org/locations/list-your-property)

For more information or other ways to get involved contact Laura Hilton, Film Liaison for Whidbey & Camano Islands: laura@whidbeycamanoislands.com or 360-202-6456



WhidbeyCamanoIslands.com



Public Relations Overview

Erin Osborne

The year is off to a strong start following a highly successful trip to IMM in New York. Erin met with 24 travel writers, covering topics like sustainability, off the beaten path and conservation. Publications represented, which range from Travel + Leisure and Food & Wine to Sierra, AFAR and Outside, are listed in detail within the project management portion of this report. Several content partnerships initiated at IMM are already in development for this year, with several more on the horizon.

Simultaneously, ON PR has been working to secure coverage for upcoming events, including Sound University, Penn Cove Water Festival and more. We are also actively developing the 2024 PR plan in partnership with the creative team. Coming up, we will be supporting the launch of the culture and heritage guide, working on itineraries for spring media tours, spring and summer calendar alerts and developing new storylines and messaging that align with the integrated strategy.

Press Highlights include 9 pieces of coverage with an audience of 9.58 million people. To view the coverage in full go here.

Project Management

- Joined bi-monthly creative team meeting
- Developed draft PR plan and timeline, for integration with the comprehensive marketing plan; mapped out the strategy for media and influencer visits for 2024.
- Drafted a press release highlighting the new leadership that resulted in the following coverage
 - A feature article in Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce
 - An article in the South Whidbey Record
- Delivered a story sheet to the media highlighting events and notable activities in the coming months. Our outreach resulted in the following interest:
 - Thrillist, Jennifer Matson
 - Freelance writer, Melanie Haiken
 - King 5 New Day Northwest, cooking segment with Wildly Beloved Foods
 - Freelance writer, Margot Bigg
- Connected with Whidbey Pickle Barn to explore media pitching angles to showcase the new pickleball court. Added details to the latest story sheet.
- Worked with Northwest Meetings + Events to complete an interview answers and source images for a feature on the Sound Waters University event.
- Worked in tandem with State of WA Tourism to secure lodging and sights to explore around Whidbey Island for Brad Wright, travel editor for Westways, the AAA of Southern California around the Cascade Loop for the summer of 2024.
- Secured new interest in collaborative storytelling, secured new opportunities and managed existing partnerships with several partners, outlined below.

International Media Marketplace

Following the conference, and 24 individual meetings with the media listed within this document linked here, Erin handled individual follow with key contacts. While many of these relationships will take time to develop stories, the following contacts have already expressed interest in stories, visits and collaborations.

Confirmed visits:

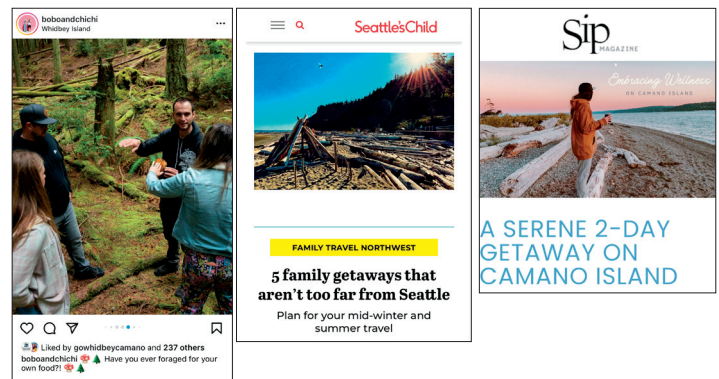
- Caroline Stratos, Caroline’s Corner/syndicated to Matador Network – visiting Camano Island 3/31-4/1
- Kathryn Wagner, interested in regenerative, slow travel themes for pitching to Modern Luxury and The Guardian; visit date May TBD
- Alisha McDarris, freelances about sustainable and adventure travel for Sierra, Backpacker, and BBC Travel will be in the region in May; working to incorporate a visit to her research trip.
- Abbie Syman, “Speck on the Globe” which started as a travel blog, and evolved into solo women’s travel consultancy and social media pages - all focusing on ethical, slow travel. She also contributes sustainable travel content to media outlets like Insider, Veranda and Globe & Mail. Visit to both islands is slated for Sept. TBD

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 2,974 on January 10 to 3047 on February 10, a growth rate of 2.45%.

Pending Press

- USA Today Syndicate, a second story by Jean Chen Smith is anticipated
- Welcome Magazine (German Cruising Publication), writer Susanne Mueller staying on Whidbey Island August 29-30 as part of a Port of Seattle arranged media tour
- ParentMap, inclusion of the Penn Cove Water Festival in their spring arts roundup, pending run date early March
- Social post on SEAtoday’s Instagram and potential inclusion in events section of upcoming email blast for the Film Festival





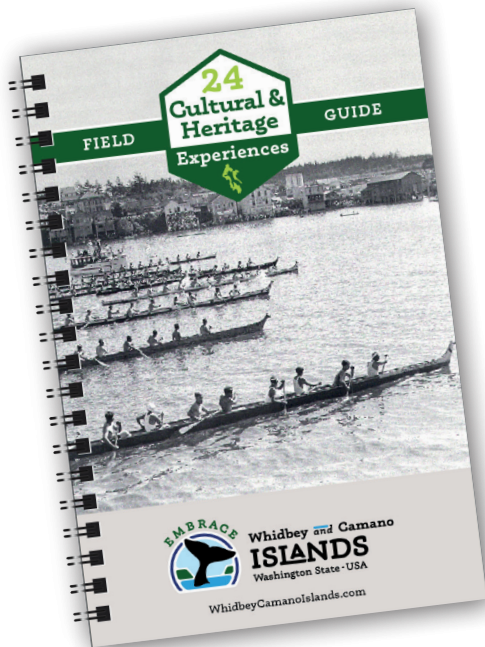
Brand Management and Creative Services

Scott and Kerry Rosenkranz

The Culture and Heritage guide is on its way!

This last month we completed EWCI proofing and revisions and approval for release to the printer. Following that we proofed layout, color and bindery with the printer, worked through the necessary revision and approved the file for printing. The guide has now been printed and I was at the press check with Hemlock Printing in BC, it looked great coming off the press. The job has now moved into bindery and should be delivered around the end of March!

We have also been working on materials for the guides release on the website and other digital materials for the guide, such as the e-newsletter header images and map locator icons.



Embrace Program Manager

Krista Loercher

The second half of January was a blur of meetings and preparation for my first public event representing Embrace at Sound Waters University 2024. February has been about embarking on a 'listening tour' to ask questions, hear concerns, brainstorm projects, identify barriers, and build rapport. My plan is to work in a concentric circle, beginning with the destination transformers and regenerative pillars, and then working out to other individuals and orgs in the community. The listening tour began in February and will extend through the end of Q1 2024.

Met with Mona Campbell and talked about regenerative initiatives and current challenges at Kristopherson Farm, compared notes from the TTC Destination transformer class, and brainstormed some possible ideas for simultaneous Camano - Whidbey events.

Attended the second of three educational sessions provided by State of WA tourism about the International Tourism trade.

Completed the online sessions for the Winter 2024 5- week Transformational Design Program taught by the Transformational Tourism Council (TTC). I will continue to work on my Capstone project through the end of February, which is a 'cliff notes' users guide to regenerative tourism on Whidbey and Camano Islands.

Attended Sound Waters University 2024, held at Coupeville High School on Saturday, Feb 3rd. Although I did hear the keynote and attended a couple of classes, I spent a good amount of the day at the Embrace table, answering questions, giving out trail guides, and connecting with other attendees. See below for a more detailed report on that event.

Set up meetings for later in February with Pillars Marie Shimada and Jennifer Schmitz, destination regeneration participant Judy Feldman of the Organic Farm School, and Shannon Bly of Whidbey Island Grown. Also have a conversation scheduled with Dawnielle Dawnielle Tehama, Executive Director of the Willamette Valley Visitors Association to see how their regenerative destination is progressing.



ComputerPIX (Continued from pg 5)

Digital Marketing

Jack Penland

This report covers the calendar year 2023 and is filtered to exclude single-day visitors. We also are excluding Stanwood from this report due to the high volume of Stanwood-Camano commuter traffic.

Digging more deeply, here’s how Seattle’s and Bellevue’s influence stacks up region by region.

	Seattle	Bellevue
Camano	6.58%	1.08%
Whidbey	7.32%	1.31%
Clinton	18.88%	1.19%
Langley	16.18%	1.52%
Freeland	13.97%	2.02%
Coupeville	6.8%	1.49%
Oak Harbor	3.4%	.78%

Now, let’s look at a couple of North Sound communities.

	Burlington	Mt. Vernon
Camano	5.85%	12.51%
Whidbey	1.78%	10.04%
Clinton	1.2%	1.74%
Langley	1.75%	2.13%
Freeland	2.58%	3.73%
Coupeville	3.07%	4.67%
Oak Harbor	7.46%	14.72%

When viewing age and income, the data is fairly uniform.

	Age 25 - 44	Age 45 - 64
Camano	27.9%	34%
Whidbey	29%	33.6%
Clinton	25.4%	36.5%
Langley	23.6%	37%
Freeland	24.5%	34.7%
Coupeville	26.1%	35.8%
Oak Harbor	31.3%	31.9%

	\$50K - \$99K	\$100K - \$150K	\$150K +
Camano	21.5%	25%	18.4%
Whidbey	19.2%	23.2%	18.8%
Clinton	15.4%	24.8%	31.7%
Langley	15.4%	22.3%	34.5%
Freeland	18%	26.3%	28.9%
Coupeville	20.7%	22.4%	23%
Oak Harbor	17.5%	21.8%	13.6%

A Tale of Two Events at SWU (Continued from pg 2)

snacks but also right at the start of the hallway that led to the majority of the classes. The trail guides were the most popular, and many did take the time to read the informational graphics about regenerative tourism. I had good conversations with a number of folks who stopped at the table and over a dozen people signed up to be on our e-newsletter list. The keynote talk and the classes were all well received and everyone in attendance seemed to be happy with the content and grateful to be gathering together again to learn about some of the many ways Island County is responding to changes in the Salish Sea.

However, the event seemed a shadow of its pre-COVID self. I estimate that the in-person attendees were about half of previous events. Although the content itself was very good, it was very focused on marine science whereas in years past, the content was more diverse and yet more applicable such as weather, microplastics in personal care products, and how to care for your septic system. Most importantly, the attendees appeared to be the same core group that supports Sound Waters year in and year out. Previous events would draw more people who were new to Island County and also drew people from Jefferson, Snohomish, and King counties.

I have requested statistics and feedback on attendance, volunteerism, and sponsors and exhibitors from Sound Water Stewards, but have not yet received anything at the time of this report. If and when I do receive any information from SWS, I will pass it along.