

Joint Tourism Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes, September 3, 2026

Call to Order

The September meeting of the Joint Tourism Advisory Committee was called to order by Lee Ann Mozes, Tourism Program Manager, at 11:05 a.m.

Roll Call & Introductions

In Person

- Lee Ann Mozes
- Bryan Stucky
- Angela Muniz
- Rose Woods
- Gregg Lanza
- Eric Marshall

Attending Remotely

- Lynda Eccles
- Aly Willis
- Jessica McCready

Public Comment

No public comments were received.

Program Updates & Discussion

1. RFQ Update

Lee Ann provided an update on the five tourism services RFQs, which closed August 28. More than 200 submissions were received across the five opportunities.

Initial screening has been completed, and the review committee is evaluating the remaining qualified submissions. Gregg Lanza and Lynda Eccles are participating in the review process.

- **Review:** Evaluation of submissions is scheduled to conclude September 4.

- **Interviews:** Candidate interviews are anticipated September 14–18.
- **Contracts:** New contracts are anticipated to begin November 1, with transition overlap as needed.

2. Stakeholder Resources & Community Pulse

Lee Ann reviewed the Stakeholder Resources section of the tourism website, including Community Pulse and resources for requesting tourism data and Event Insights reports.

Members were reminded that Event Insights data requires approximately six weeks following an event to mature before a report can be prepared.

The committee discussed the value of Community Pulse as a way for local partners to share events, business developments, visitor trends, and potential tourism stories. Lee Ann shared recent KING 5 coverage of Orlando's and The Family Fork as an example of a story that originated through Community Pulse and was subsequently pitched by the tourism program's public relations team.

Jessica McCready suggested creating greater visibility into Community Pulse submissions so committee members can see what has already been shared and avoid duplication. Lee Ann will explore options for providing that visibility.

3. Community Updates

Committee members shared updates from their respective communities, including upcoming events, new and expanding businesses, and recent visitor activity.

Angela Muniz reported growth within the Freeland business community and increased collaboration among South Whidbey chambers.

The committee also discussed strong visitor interest surrounding Practical Magic-related activities and opportunities to connect events and businesses across communities through itineraries and visitor information.

Transformational Travel

The committee continued its discussion of transformational travel following the August meeting.

Lee Ann noted that broader implementation will be explored after the current RFQ process is completed and new contractors are in place.

The committee discussed opportunities including:

- Experiences connecting visitors with local history, culture, nature, and community.
- Themed and interpretive maps.
- Digital quests and scavenger hunts.
- Experiences connecting Whidbey and Camano Islands.
- Off-season activities that encourage visitors to explore multiple communities.

Members discussed a potential countywide or islands-wide scavenger hunt or quest concept as an off-season visitor experience. A similar concept currently being explored locally may provide an opportunity for collaboration rather than creating a separate program.

Visitor Information & Frequently Asked Questions

Committee members discussed the information most frequently requested by visitors.

Common requests include:

- Maps and driving information.
- Restaurants and lodging.
- Beaches, trails, and outdoor recreation.
- Public transportation.
- Family activities.
- Birding and bicycling.
- Antiquing.
- Film locations.
- Events and activities.

Members noted that printed maps remain highly requested despite the availability of digital information.

The committee discussed opportunities for themed maps and simple itineraries that could help visitors discover multiple communities and encourage longer stays.

Datafy Website Attribution & Visitor Value

Lee Ann reviewed Datafy website attribution information showing how tourism website activity can be connected to attributable trips and estimated economic impact.

Year-to-date reporting showed approximately 4,300 attributable trips and approximately \$763,000 in estimated economic impact, including approximately 266 lodging trips.

The committee discussed the opportunity to improve conversion from website engagement to overnight visitation and considered what types of visitors provide the greatest value during shoulder and winter seasons.

Discussion included:

- The continued priority of generating overnight stays.
- The economic value of day visitors during slower periods.
- Visitor spending at locally owned businesses.
- Repeat visitation and long-term visitor value.
- The potential for positive visitor experiences to generate future visits and word-of-mouth referrals.

The committee generally recognized that while overnight stays remain a primary tourism objective, day visitors can provide meaningful economic value during periods when local businesses have additional capacity.

Datafy Campaign Strategy

Lee Ann discussed Datafy's advertising capabilities, which allow the tourism program to measure whether individuals exposed to advertising subsequently visit Island County, spend money, and stay overnight.

The committee discussed potential geographic targeting strategies for future campaigns.

- Longer-distance markets such as Portland and Spokane may provide stronger opportunities for overnight visitation during peak travel periods.
- Seattle/Tacoma and other drive markets may provide valuable incremental visitation during shoulder and winter seasons.
- Canadian visitors may represent an additional market opportunity.
- Future campaign evaluation will increasingly focus on attributable visitation, spending, and lodging rather than traditional advertising metrics alone.

Budget & Lodging Tax Discussion

Lee Ann reviewed year-to-date budget and lodging tax information.

Members also discussed short-term rental activity throughout Island County and the potential value of understanding the number and distribution of rentals by ZIP code.

Questions were raised regarding lodging tax collection through platforms including Airbnb, VRBO, Hipcamp, Booking.com, and Expedia.

Lee Ann will explore available short-term rental data and determine whether Datafy or another available source can provide additional information. Angela Muniz will send Lee Ann additional information regarding the request.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting is scheduled for October 1, 2026, at 11:00 a.m.

Adjournment

Hearing no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:13 p.m.