



2020 LTAC FINAL REPORT

In what we assume is a universal statement from all LTAC recipients, 2020 was an unprecedented year for the Bainbridge Island Chamber of Commerce.

Despite a rising tide of unsettling news, Q1 proceeded along the usual lines – creating new marketing materials, beginning the planning arrangements and logistics for the Grand Old 4th + Celebrate Bainbridge, and serving winter season visitors at our Winslow Way information desk.

And then came Q2.

Between the scramble of the world adjusting to a new reality, the almost total end of tourist traffic and the cancellation of the summer cruise season, the island visitor landscape shifted on its axis. Also, the Chamber's long-time President/CEO, Rex Oliver announced that he was stepping down for medical reasons, effective immediately, and sadly passed away a couple of months later.

Under the leadership of interim President/CEO Kevin Dwyer, new post-pandemic plans were quickly put in place by the end of Q2:

- While our offices remained open to the public, all business was conducted at the door by our core full-time staff only.
- Our volunteer staff was asked to stay away until more was known – this then ended up being true for the rest of 2020, and so did also reduced our primary means of counting visitors, something that has been a centerpiece of past reporting.
- Efforts were focused on distributing visitor information via our flyer racks on Winslow Way and at the Ferry Terminal – more than 40,000 maps were given out.
- The Grand Old 4th Plans became a sprint through 2nd, 3rd and 4th level creative fallbacks (and logistical shifts) before eventually being cancelled at the end of Q2.
- Chamber operations shifted into support mode for our community – helping businesses and the island in general set safety guidelines and standards, tracking and announcing federal, state and local recovery funding opportunities, distributing thousands of masks and PPE equipment and helping tourist-facing establishments navigate tough waters.

For all those reasons, we only submitted reimbursement requests for the (relatively unaffected) Q1 and (emergency mode) Q2 periods – totaling less than half of the \$40,000 granted to the Chamber for 2020. The efforts proved prescient and effective enough to cover the reduced operations for the rest of 2020.

On a brighter note, the shift in operations created some time and space for future planning, so by the end of 2020, the formation and operations of Visit Bainbridge Island were better defined (as a close partner, but separate organization from the Chamber).



Within that core partnership, it is agreed that the Chamber's core role is to continue being the ambassador for the Island, creator of the year's largest community events, and the first point of contact with Bainbridge visitors via our tourism facilities.

With my hiring as the full-time leader of the Chamber, we also had the chance to solidified the working partnership between not just us and VBI, but also in concert with the Downtown Association and the Lodging/Hospitality Association – both of which also have new faces at their helms.

As I complete this report today, the Chamber is in the midst of planning a new 'Pandemic Edition' Grand Old 4th and renovating the Chamber Office Information Desk & Ferry Terminal Kiosk to better serve of our mission to lead Island efforts both in attracting and serving both walking and driving visitors in 2021 – both efforts born of the 2020 planning efforts.

Finally, I am delighted to note that the revamped Kiosk opened to the public for Summer Season 2021 about an hour ago, and the Chamber Office Information Desk will follow suit this Tuesday (the first of June).

Bring on the new normal!

Stefan Goldby

President/CEO

Bainbridge Island Chamber of Commerce

395 Winslow Way E

Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

206-842-3700

stefan@bainbridgechamber.com