



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Meeting Minutes Tourism Commission

Commission Members: Devon Calvin, Ian Dempster, Vaughn Hazel, Bethany Lowrance, Carol Bryant-Martin, Alana Peterson, and Jeremy Plank

Ex Officio: Amy Ainslie and Rachel Roy

January 15, 2026

6:00 P.M.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Chair Plank called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Devon Calvin, Vaughn Hazel, Bethany Lowrance, Carol Bryant-Martin, and Jeremy Plank.

Absent: Ian Dempster (resigned); Alana Peterson (resigned).

Ex-Officio: Amy Ainslie (P&CD Director) and Rachel Roy (Visit Sitka)

Public: Scott Saline (Assembly liaison), Larry Edwards

Ainslie shared that Ian Dempster resigned from the Commission due to a change in his occupation; he had asked Ainslie to convey his deep appreciation for the work of the Commission and opportunity to serve. In addition, she explained that Lillian Feldpausch was to take over Alana Peterson's seat for the Sitka Tribe of Alaska pending Assembly confirmation.

Secretary Bryant-Martin confirmed a quorum was present.

II. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

M-Bryant-Martin/S-Lowrance moved to elect Jeremy Plank as Chair. No other nominations were made. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

M-Plank/S-Hazel moved to elect Bethany Lowrance as Vice Chair. No other nominations were made. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

M-Hazel/S-Plank moved to elect Carol Bryant-Martin as Secretary. No other nominations were made. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

III. CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA

None.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

M/Bryant-Martin/S-Lowrance moved to approve the minutes of September 11, 2025, and November 13, 2025. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Update on Visit Sitka Contract

Ainslie reported that CBS executed the Visit Sitka contract with Element Agency. A liaison from Visit Sitka will continue to work closely with the Commissioners on marketing initiatives and the TBMP program, and would add key performance indicators (KPIs) for data tracking in coordination with subcontractor Agnew Beck Consulting. Agnew Beck's parameters for economic data collection are being developed and will be included in the field surveys. Ainslie thanked Rachel Roy and her team for their depth of community knowledge, involvement and care shown during their time running Visit Sitka. Roy asked about the TBMP program start date and incorporating TBMP membership into other CBS permitting procedures. Ainslie replied that the start date was planned for the 2026 visitor season and shared and that more research was needed to figure out how to tie TBMP membership to CBS permits while accommodating appropriate due process procedures. Bryant-Martin inquired whether the Visit Sitka contractor will be remote from Anchorage or on-site in Sitka. Ainslie explained that the work will be hybrid remote with a communications manager based in Sitka. No formal business action was taken.

B. Discussion and recommendations on Lincoln Street closure and other city operations for the 2026 visitor season.

The commissioners reviewed feedback from the 2025 End-of-Season survey and discussed the pros and cons of keeping Lincoln Street open or closed, as well as recommendations for city operations for the 2026 visitor season. Lowrance noted that the survey data was contradictory and that the decision to keep Lincoln Street open or closed is difficult. Calvin observed that there might be missing data on overcrowding and safety measures, particularly regarding free passage on sidewalks and streets. While some commissioners favored closing Lincoln Street, others discussed the possibility of making it one-way. Hazel suggested a one-way traffic flow from east to west. Lowrance preferred the opposite direction for a one-way road from west to east. Ainslie shared the equipment and operational requirements for a one-way option, and recommended that no decision regarding a one-way option (including traffic direction) be made until she could consult with other CBS departments including Public Works, Police, and Fire; Ainslie would bring back their comments to the next meeting.

Plank asked members of the public for comment on the topic. Larry Edwards supported keeping both Lincoln Street and Maksoutoff Street open. Scott Saline remarked that DOT might offer better ways to transport people from HPR to Lincoln Street.

M-Lowrance/S-Hazel moved to recommend the following for city operations for the 2026 visitor season: Use Maksoutoff Street for placement of temporary restrooms pending the future decision of Lincoln Street closure, employ pedestrian monitors and crossing guards along Harbor Drive and other downtown locations as identified by the 2025 commissioners, and increase CBS trash cans and pick-ups along Lincoln Street. Motion passed 5-0 by roll-call vote.

C. 2026 Commission Priorities

Ainslie presented a list of items that the commissioners discussed during previous meetings and requested rankings based on the identified priorities. She noted that time-sensitive topics required before the 2026 visitor season begins include decisions on Lincoln Street closures and other city operations, refresh and finalization of the TBMP program, and collection of visitor economic data. Ainslie reviewed additional items: report to community on tourism-related revenue, cruise dock zoning changes, food cart permits, e-bikes, wayfinding, and beautification projects. Roy suggested adding CBS wayfinding, kiosk maps, interpretative signage, and vehicular wayfinding to the list. Plank recommended exploring downtown beautification and citywide art projects. Commissioners had consensus on the project prioritization as listed in the packet with the additions from Plank and Roy being added at the end of the list. No formal business action was taken.

VI. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

Chairman Plank recognized Larry Edwards to speak. Edwards asked CBS to publish the Tourism Commission meeting packets with enough time for public review and comment.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Chair Plank adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Minutes By: Carol Bryant-Martin, Secretary