



Tourism Commission Agenda

Thursday, July 9, 2026, 6:00 PM
Harrigan Centennial Hall, 330 Harbor Drive

Members: Jeremy Plank, Bethany Lowrance, Carol Bryant-Martin, Devon Calvin,
Vaughn Hazel, Sherri Blankenship, Lillian Feldpausch
Victoria Wright (ex officio), Judson Rusk (ex officio)

I. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

II. CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. May 14, 2026
- B. June 11, 2026

IV. REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE

- C. Sales Tax Collection on Cruise Ship Retail Sales

V. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(For items ON or OFF the agenda – not to exceed 3 minutes)*

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- D. 2026 Visitor Intercept Survey Questions

VII. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(For items ON or OFF the agenda – not to exceed 3 minutes)*

VIII. ADJOURNMENT



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Meeting Minutes Tourism Commission

Commission Members: Jeremy Plank, Bethany Lowrance, Carol Bryant-Martin, Vaughn Hazel, Devon Calvin, Sherri Blankenship, Lillian Feldpausch

Ex Officio: Amy Ainslie, Judson Rusk, Katie O'Neil,

May 14, 2026

6:00 P.M.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Chair Plank called the Sitka Tourism Commission meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

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

Absent: Lillian Feldpausch

Ex-Officio Present: Amy Ainslie, Judson Rusk, Katie O'Neil,

Secretary Bryant-Martin confirmed a quorum was present.

II. CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA

None.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

M-Blankenship/S-Hazel moved to approve the minutes dated April 9, 2026. The motion passed by a 6/0 voice vote.

IV. REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE

A. Cruise Ship Fuel and Sustainability Discussions

City Tourism Manager Rusk presented a memo on the use of cruise ship fuel and sustainability topics. He noted that research on clean fuel use in other Alaskan cities is in process. He noted that various studies present different data points, and the accuracy of the information is difficult to assess due to the variables that vary across criteria. No formal business action was taken.

V. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

Rusk explained that an additional 'Persons to Be Heard' agenda item has been added to allow community members to provide input earlier during tourism commission meetings, rather than waiting until the end, a format consistent with other city commission meetings.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Update on Airport Visitor Survey and question review

Rusk announced that the Airport Visitor Survey went live on May 1, 2026. He noted that the questionnaire included in the meeting packet was designed specifically to keep the visitor survey to two minutes while still gathering specific data. Blankenship suggested adding a question about the visitor's favorite experiences in Sitka. Community member J.J. Carlson spoke and stated that approximately half

of travelers to Sitka participate in fishing charters. She proposed adding options to the survey to include fishing charters as a reason for visiting, and following up with asking how many fish boxes the guests are leaving with. No formal business action was taken.

B. Review Draft TBMP Operational Framework

Agnew::Beck presented an overview of the draft TBMP Operational Framework document. The discussion included topics on the cooperative nature of TBMP partners, guidelines, and plans for implementation and ongoing operations. The framework established TBMP program roles, policies, membership enrollment, and plans to draft a partnership agreement by April 1. Setting up a hotline will be a priority once guidelines are in place. Commissioners discussed program compliance, how operator complaints will be handled, and the maintenance of reports to be shared with the Tourism Commission. No formal business action was taken.

C. Review of TBMP website

Commissioners reviewed the prototype of the TBMP website. The website serves as a hub of information for businesses, operators, visitors, and residents. Through the website, individuals can submit a claim, compliment, complaint, or concern by calling the hotline or sending an email. There will also be the ability to upload photos, such as a license plate, if warranted. Commissioners discussed the logo design of the TBMP decal to be featured on the website. Plank stated that the TBMP Program appears transparent and hopes to see traction during the inaugural 2026 visitor season. No formal business action was taken.

VII. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

Chair Plank recognized JJ Carlson to speak. Carlson stated that she had waited for years for a TBMP program to be rolled out in Sitka. She plans to participate in the program once it is implemented. She suggested adding page numbers to the draft TBMP documents.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Chair Plank adjourned the meeting at 7:36 p.m.

Minutes By: Carol Bryant-Martin, Secretary



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Meeting Minutes Tourism Commission

Commission Members: Jeremy Plank, Bethany Lowrance, Carol Bryant-Martin, Vaughn Hazel, Devon Calvin, Sherri Blankenship, Lillian Feldpausch

Ex Officio: Judson Rusk, Tourism Manager, Katie O'Neil, Element Agency (On Leave), and Victoria Wright, Visit Sitka.

June 11, 2026

6:00 P.M.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Chair Plank called the Sitka Tourism Commission meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

ROLL CALL

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

Absent: Lillian Feldpausch, Sherri Blankenship (Excused).

Ex-Officio Present: Judson Rusk, Tourism Manager, and Victoria Wright, Visit Sitka

Ex-Officio Absent: Katie O'Neil, Element Agency (On Leave).

Public: Rachel Roy (Zoom).

Secretary Bryant-Martin confirmed a quorum was present.

II. CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA

None.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

None.

IV. REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE

A. Visit Sitka Ex-Officio member temporary change

City Tourism Manager Rusk announced that Katie O'Neil (Element Agency), ex officio, will be on maternity leave until November 2026. Victoria Wright (Visit Sitka) will serve as an interim liaison to the Tourism Commission.

B. Topline update on airport Wi-Fi Survey

Rusk gave the commissioners the May 2026 topline results of the airport visitor survey prepared by the McKinley Research Group. He reported a survey response rate of 9% at the Sitka airport, higher than the response rates for surveys conducted at the Anchorage and Fairbanks airports, which range from 4% to 6%. A majority of the respondents are out-of-town target audience members rather than in-town residents. He noted that overall survey participation is going well. Plank remarked that the survey provides a good snapshot of visitation to Sitka. No formal business action was taken.

V. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

None.

VI. NEW BUSINESS**Approval of TBMP Guidelines for 2026 Season**

Commissioners reviewed public comments and recommended edits to the 2026 TBMP guidelines, a voluntary compliance program for businesses, attractions, and tour operators in Sitka. These guidelines do not replace city, state, or federal regulations. Rusk noted that during the inaugural 2026 season, the overall goal is to establish and test an operational framework for the TBMP program. The draft TBMP guidelines covered regulations on charter and tour activities, retail partners, traffic management, and cruise ship activities for registered TBMP partners. TBMP incentives and business participants will be listed on the Visit Sitka website, in the city visitor guide, and on social media. Rusk also proposed revising vehicle size restrictions on Jeff Davis to improve safety for pedestrians and smaller vehicles, but changes will not be made until the 2027 season due to the additional time required to research specific regulations. Commissioners also reviewed written public comments advocating for e-bike and bicycle safety. Lowrance recommended addressing issues with the literature and signage, which clearly designate bike lane locations.

M/Bryant-Martin/S-Lowrance moved to approve the TBMP Guidelines for the 2026 Season as presented in the June 11, 2026, packet with approved edits related to watercraft. The motion passed 5/0 by voice vote.

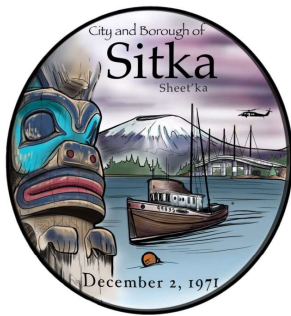
VII. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

Chair Plank recognized Rachel Roy, Executive Director of the Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce, to speak (Zoom). Roy updated the Commissioners on the 4th of July route changes due to construction and requested feedback before releasing the details to the public. The new route will begin at the Crescent Harbor playground, continue down Lincoln Street to Harbor Drive, and pass under the O'Connell Bridge. No formal business action was taken.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Chair Plank adjourned the meeting at 6:39 p.m.

Minutes By: Carol Bryant-Martin, Secretary



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

ADMINISTRATION

100 Lincoln Street | Sitka, Alaska 99835

www.cityofsitka.com

administrator@cityofsitka.org

907-747-1812

June 24, 2026

[VIA EMAIL ONLY]

Cruise Lines International Association
1201 F Street NW, Suite 250
Washington, DC 20004

Re: Sales Tax Collection Obligations

Ms. Renee Limoge Reeve:

I am writing on behalf of the City and Borough of Sitka to address the collection of local sales tax by cruise lines and their tour and excursion partners operating within Sitka's jurisdiction. It is the City and Borough's position that sales tax collection obligations under Sitka General Code (SGC) Chapter 4.25 apply to a broad range of transactions conducted in connection with cruise operations in Sitka, and we are initiating a direct effort to ensure compliance with these requirements.

SGC 4.25.010(A) levies a consumer's sales tax on all sales, rentals, and leases made within the City and Borough of Sitka, including sales of services performed wholly or partially within the City and Borough when the provision of such services originates or terminates within the City and Borough. SGC 4.25.030 further establishes that every sale made within the City and Borough is taxable unless a specific exemption under SGC 4.25.100 applies and is properly documented. These provisions apply broadly to transactions connected to cruise activity, including those facilitated by cruise lines and their partners.

Of particular relevance to cruise-related commerce is SGC 4.25.100(P), which governs the wholesale exemption. A wholesale purchase made for resale may qualify for exemption at the point of initial sale to the cruise line; however, that exemption does not eliminate the ultimate sales tax obligation. Excursions, tours, and other passenger services purchased at wholesale from operators within the City and Borough and resold to passengers at any price and at any location are subject to Sitka sales tax on the full retail sales price when those services are performed wholly or partially within the City and Borough and originate or terminate here, as provided under SGC 4.25.010(A). The wholesale exemption is intended to prevent double taxation within a supply chain and does not extend to the final consumer transaction. Accordingly, the obligation to collect and remit sales tax attaches to the seller at the point of final sale to the consumer,

regardless of whether that sale occurs aboard the vessel, through an online platform, or at a shore-side location.

The City and Borough recognizes that SGC applies across the full geographic extent of the borough, which encompasses a substantial amount of area around Baranof Island. We also understand that applying sales tax obligations to cruise vessels throughout the entirety of that area would not reflect a practical or good-faith approach to administration or enforcement. In the interest of working collaboratively with CLIA and supporting efficient cruise operations, the City and Borough intends to apply these requirements to onboard transactions only when a vessel enters Sitka Sound. By establishing this boundary, operationally reasonable enforcement will be easier to achieve while maintaining consistency with SGC 4.25.010(A) and SGC 4.25.030.

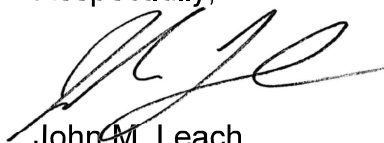
For clarity and consistency, Sitka Sound is defined using the same geographic boundary established by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, enclosed on the north by lines from Kruzof Island at 57° 20.50' N. lat., 135° 45.17' W. long. to Chichagof Island at 57° 22.05' N. lat., 135° 43' W. long., and from Chichagof Island at 57° 22.58' N. lat., 135° 41.30' W. long. to Baranof Island at 57° 22.28' N. lat., 135° 40.95' W. long., and on the south and west by a line running from the southernmost tip of Sitka Point at 56° 59.38' N. lat., 135° 49.57' W. long. to Hanus Point at 56° 51.92' N. lat., 135° 30.50' W. long. to the green day marker in Dorothy Narrows at 56° 49.28' N. lat., 135° 22.75' W. long. to Baranof Island at 56° 49.28' N. lat., 135° 22.60' W. long.

The City and Borough of Sitka anticipates full implementation of these requirements by the beginning of the 2027 cruise season, defined as the first port of call of a CLIA represented cruise line into Sitka during the 2027 calendar year. This timeline provides sufficient opportunity to align operational, accounting, and compliance systems with the requirements of Sitka General Code.

The City and Borough is committed to working collaboratively with CLIA and its member lines to ensure clear and effective compliance. We welcome the opportunity to meet at a mutually convenient time to discuss implementation.

Please direct correspondence on this matter to my attention at administrator@cityofsitka.org.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Leach', written over a horizontal line.

John M. Leach
Municipal Administrator
City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska

Visit Sitka: 2026 Intercept Survey

Introduction

Hello! The City of Sitka is gathering feedback from visitors to better understand travel experiences and identify ways to improve services, amenities, and attractions for visitors. This survey should take approximately 5-7 minutes to complete. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used only for planning and improvement purposes.

Thank you for helping us improve the visitor experience in Sitka.

Screeners Questions

1. Please select the option that best describes you:
 - a. I live in Sitka (either full time or part time)*
 - b. I am visiting Sitka and live elsewhere

*Survey Logic: If (a) is selected, respondent will receive the following message: “Thank you for your interest! This survey is intended for visitors. The City and Borough of Sitka will be fielding a separate end of season community survey in fall 2026 to collect feedback from Sitka residents.”

2. Are you a cruise passenger?
 - a. Yes*
 - b. No

*Survey Logic: If (a) is selected, the survey will be programed to skip questions 3-6, resuming at question 7 for cruise passengers. Non-cruise passengers will continue to question 3.

Visitor Profile

3. Is this your first visit to Sitka?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. How many days are you spending in Sitka during this trip?
 - a. 1 day or less
 - b. 2-3 days
 - c. 4-7 days
 - d. More than 7 days
5. What was your primary mode of travel to Sitka?
 - a. Commercial Airline
 - b. Private boat/yacht
 - c. Ferry
 - d. Private Aircraft
 - e. Other (please specify)

6. Where are you staying while in Sitka?
 - a. Hotel/Motel
 - b. AirBnB/Rental Property
 - c. Lodge
 - d. Campground
 - e. With Family/Friends
 - f. Private boat/yacht
 - g. Day-Tripper (not staying overnight)
 - h. Other (please specify)
7. How many people are in your travel group, including yourself?
8. What is your home Zip Code or country of origin?
9. How did you first hear about Sitka as a destination?
 - a. Search Engine (*e.g. Google, Bing or DuckDuckGo*)
 - b. Social Media (*e.g. Facebook, Instagram or TikTok*)
 - c. AI (*e.g. ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini*)
 - d. Friends/Family
 - e. Travel Agent
 - f. Cruise package
 - g. Event
 - h. Other (please specify)

Activities and Visitor Experience

10. Which of the following activities have you participated in or plan on participating in during your time in Sitka? (select all that apply)
 - a. Wildlife viewing
 - b. Fishing charter
 - c. Hiking or nature walks
 - d. Guided tour
 - e. Biking or E-Biking
 - f. Kayaking or boating
 - g. Shopping
 - h. Museum or cultural attractions
 - i. Dinning at local restaurants
 - j. Photography
 - k. Other (please specify)
11. How likely are you to recommend Sitka as a good place to visit on a scale of 0 (not at all likely) and 10 (extremely likely)?*

*Survey Logic: responses of 9 and above will skip question 12. Responses of 8 and below will be asked 12 as a follow-up question.

12. What services, amenities or experiences would have improved your trip?

Barriers and Challenges

13. Did you encounter any challenges, barriers or frustrations during your visit?

- a. Yes
- b. No*

*Survey Logic: If (b) is selected, the survey will be programed to skip questions 14. Respondents who select (a) will be asked question 14 as a follow-up question.

14. Which challenges, barriers, or frustrations did you encounter during your visit? (select all that apply)

- a. Difficulty finding information
- b. Transportation challenges
- c. Limited time in port/community
- d. Weather related issues
- e. Cost of activities
- f. Cost of food or shopping
- g. Limited dining options
- h. Limited activity options
- i. Accessibility challenges
- j. Difficulty navigating town
- k. Crowding/congestion
- l. Limited public restrooms
- m. Limited internet/mobile services
- n. Other (please specify)

Economic Impact

15. Approximately how much did your travel party spend, or do you expect to spend in Sitka during this visit, not including transportation to/from Sitka and lodging? Your estimate should include tours, food, gifts/souvenirs and local transportation

- a. Less than \$50
- b. \$50-\$99
- c. \$100-\$249
- d. \$250-\$499
- e. \$500-\$999
- f. \$1,000-\$1,999
- g. \$2,000 or more
- h. Prefer not to answer

Demographics

16. What is your gender?

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Non-Binary
- d. Prefer not to say

17. What is your age?
- Under 25
 - 25-34
 - 35-44
 - 45-54
 - 55-64
 - 65+
18. Which of the following categories best describes your annual household income?
- \$50,000 or less
 - \$50,001 to \$75,000
 - \$75,001 to \$100,000
 - \$100,001 to \$125,000
 - \$125,001 to \$150,000
 - \$151,000 to \$200,000
 - More than \$200,000
 - Prefer not to answer
19. Are there children (under 18 years of age) traveling with you?
- Yes
 - No

Final Thoughts

20. Please rate the following aspects of your experience in Sitka

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Did Not Use
Visitor information and wayfinding					
Transportation options					
Attractions and activities					
Restaurants and food options					
Shopping opportunities					
Public facilities (restrooms, seating, etc.)					
Customer service/hospitality					
Safety and comfort					