CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Meeting Minutes - Final
Sustainability Commission

Officers: Chair Aurora Taylor, Vice Chair Elizabeth Bagley, Secretary Erik de Jong
Members: Gerry Hope, Adam Vail
Staff Liaison: Bri Gabel, Sustainability Coordinator
Assembly Liaison: Tim Pike

Monday, May 4, 2026	6:00 p.m.	Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Taylor called the meeting to order at approximately 6:03 p.m.

Present: Aurora Taylor (Chair), Elizabeth Bagley, Gerry Hope, Erik de Jong, Adam Vail, Timothy Pike (Assembly Liaison)

Absent: None

Staff: Bri Gabel (Sustainability Coordinator), Amy Ainslie (Planning and Community Development Director)

Public: Aaron Brakel, Grant EchoHawk (Southeast Alaska Conservation Council)

II. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA

Hope moved to pass the agenda without changes.
Motion PASSED 5-0 by voice vote.

III. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

Approve the April 6, 2026 minutes.

Hope moved to approve the April 6, 2026 minutes.
Motion PASSED 5-0 by voice vote.

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(not to exceed 3 minutes on topics off the agenda)*

None.

V. SPECIAL REPORTS

Grant EchoHawk, Clean Waters Strategist for the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC), presented on the use of heavy fuel oil and exhaust scrubbers by cruise ships in Alaska. He updated the Commission on current legislation that would require the use of cleaner fuels in Alaska, and that SEACC was building public consensus on the issue. He requested the Commission recommend the Assembly draft a resolution in support of ending heavy fuel and scrubber use in Alaska.

de Jong questioned the difference between open-loop and closed-loop scrubber technology usage by different cruise lines; EchoHawk responded that it was primarily larger cruise lines that use open-loop scrubbers, and that ending heavy fuel use would also end the use of scrubbers in Alaska.

Taylor inquired about the timelines of the bills; EchoHawk informed the Commission that while the bills were introduced during the current session, they likely would not be passed until the next legislative session.

Bagley questioned if legislation was the ideal route for the issue and asked about fuel availability in the community ports of call; EchoHawk noted that the current legislative landscape of international laws and local laws had too many loopholes, a large number of violations, as well as transparency challenges and the introduced legislation would close a gap. EchoHawk also noted that cleaner fuel oil infrastructure was well supported and widely available in the different communities that are frequented by cruise ships.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Approve the CBS comments on the Tongass Preliminary Draft Plan Content

Amy Ainslie, CBS Planning and Community Development Director, introduced the item and explained that CBS was a cooperating agency in the revision process. She walked through each comment section with the Commission while Commissioners asked questions and made suggestions as needed. Suggestions included requiring references and alignment with local plans, referencing appliable statutes, ensuring the comment language matched the currently accepted terminology, emphasizing specific and measurable metrics, reframing key metrics to be led by community need rather than use, and further clarification on “high” and “low” use commercial zones, and conflicting aspects of the Management Area definitions.

Anslie and the Commission reviewed the draft map of the Sitka Ranger District in the Draft Plan Content and discussed discrepancies and concerns of its classification of certain areas within the Borough. Commissioners shared concerns about the proposed Management Areas and noted that as they were currently written, were insufficient to adequately reflect community priorities without additional opportunity for public input.

Commissioners shared concerns about the vagueness and timeline of the Draft Plan Content and appreciated Anslie’s effort to draft informative comments that highlighted the need for local government involvement in the process and further support community concerns voiced at Forest Service meetings.

Hope moved to approve the draft CBS comments on the Tongass Preliminary Draft Plan Content as written and amended through Commission discussion.
Motion PASSED 5-0 by voice vote.

B. Appoint a Commissioner(s) to serve on the Sitka Community Renewable Energy Strategy (SCRES) Team

Gabel introduced the item and explained the expectations of SCRES team members. She noted that with a finalization path now determined, additional work was needed from the Commission and Assembly to appropriately interpret recommendations from the national lab technical team to make sure that goals and actions in the final SCRES are appropriate for Sitka prior to additional public comment.

Vail and de Jong volunteered with Taylor as an alternate if needed.

VIII. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(not to exceed 3 minutes on topics on or off the agenda)*

Aaron Brakel provided additional cruise ship exhaust scrubber information and spoke in support of the Sustainability Commission recommending a resolution to the Assembly to request the ending of heavy fuel use in Alaska.

IX. REPORTS *(Staff, Chair, Assembly, Commissioners)*

Staff: Gabel reported on her attendance at the Sustainable Southeast Partnership (SSP) retreat, announced the National Lab of the Rockies (NLR) Waste-to-Energy Technical Assistance report was finalized and now available, and reminded Commissioners of the upcoming SCRES Community Energy Planning Event the following week.

Assembly: Pike thanked Taylor and Bagley for their presentation at the previous Assembly meeting.

Commissioners: Bagley informed the Commission that Project Drawdown's new "Carbon in Context" tool was available online and that it was intended to help the public understand abstract concepts like Metric tons of Carbon dioxide equivalent ($MTCO_2e$) in approachable ways.

X. SET NEXT MEETING DATE AND AGENDA

The next meeting was scheduled for June 1, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in Harrigan Centennial Hall.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Taylor moved to adjourn the meeting.
Seeing no objection, the meeting ADJOURNED at approximately 7:40 p.m.

Minutes by Erik de Jong, Secretary