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# Health Needs and Human Services Commission Agenda

Wednesday, March 18, 2026 12:00 p.m.  
Harrigan Centennial Hall

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## Commission Members:

Amy Wilson, Michelle Kavouras, Amanda Roberts,  
Lawrence “Woody” Widmark, Crystal Duncan, Sophia Schwantes  
Assembly Liaison: JJ Carlson

- I. **CALL TO ORDER**
- II. **ROLL CALL**
- III. **AGENDA CHANGES**
- IV. **PERSONS TO BE HEARD** (*For items OFF the agenda - not to exceed 3 minutes*)
- V. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
  - A. February 18, 2026
- VI. **REPORTS**

Chair:  
Commissioners:  
City Staff:  
Assembly Liaison:  
Other(s):
- VII. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**
  - B. Updates from working groups
- VIII. **NEW BUSINESS**
  - C. Discussion on Tobacco and Smoke Free Parks
  - D. Review Working Group Goals
- IX. **PERSONS TO BE HEARD** (*For items ON or Off the agenda – not to exceed 3 minutes*)
- X. **ADJOURNMENT**

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 15, 2026, at noon in Harrigan Centennial Hall.

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**Health Needs and Human Services Commission Minutes**

Wednesday, February 18, 2026 12:00 p.m.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

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**Commission Members:**

**Amy Wilson, Michelle Kavouras, Crystal Duncan,  
Lawrence “Woody” Widmark, Sophia Schwantes, Amanda Roberts  
JJ Carlson (Assembly Liaison)**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Wilson called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present: Michelle Kavouras, Amy Wilson, Sophia Schwantes, Crystal Duncan, Woody Widmark (zoom)

Commissioners Absent: Amanda Roberts (excused)

**III. CORRESPONDENCE /AGENDA CHANGES**

*None.*

**IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD** *(Public participation on any item off the agenda. All public testimony is not to exceed 3 minutes for any individual, not to exceed 3 minutes)*

*None.*

**V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. January 21, 2026

**Kavouras moved to approve the minutes of January 21, 2026. Motion passed 6-0.**

**VI. REPORTS**

Chair – None.

Commissioners – None.

City Staff – Municipal Clerk Sara Peterson provided an annual commission member training.

Assembly Liaison – None.

Other(s) – None.

**VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

B. Updates from working groups

Schwantes mentioned upcoming events and initiatives related to addressing the goal “Mental Health and Suicide Prevention/Postvention.” Bill Spivey from SEARHC may present at a future HNHS meeting to present their goals this upcoming year. The “Health and Racial Equity” working group did not have an update.

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

C. Discussion/Decision to nominate a commission member to participate as a member of Sitka's Walkability Action Institute Team

Liaison Carlson provided an overview of the Walkability Program and the request for a member of the commission to participate.

**Kavouras moved to designate member Wilson of the Health Needs and Human Services Commission to participate as a member of Sitka's Walkability Action institute team. Motion passed 6-0.**

**IX. PERSONS TO BE HEARD** *(For items on or off the agenda, not to exceed 3 minutes)*

None.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

Schwantes moved to adjourn the meeting. Hearing no objections, the meeting adjourned at 1:16 p.m.

Attest:  
Holley Bayne  
Deputy Municipal Clerk

DRAFT

## **ITEM C**

### **Discussion on Tobacco and Smoke Free Parks**

# WHY TOBACCO-FREE PARKS ARE A GOOD IDEA FOR SITKA

Tobacco use is the **LEADING** cause of preventable death.



Currently, there are **four cities in Alaska** that have tobacco-free park policies. Tobacco-free outdoor environments hold many benefits for families and community members who frequent Sitka city parks. Whether they are there for recreational activities or simply enjoying the beauty the parks have to offer; tobacco-free parks are a good idea for everyone.

## Benefits

of tobacco-free environments



**LOWERS**  
tobacco use rates among youth and adults

**MODELS**  
tobacco-free behavior for kids

**PROTECTS**  
people from being exposed to secondhand smoke

**IMPROVES**  
the safety and beauty of the park by decreasing the amount of tobacco product littering

**SUPPORTS**  
people who want to quit or are trying to quit smoking



Cigarette butts are the **MOST** commonly littered item and are **NOT** biodegradable



There is **NO** safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke



9 out of 10 smokers start **BEFORE** age 18

**HOPE  
COALITION**  
Healthy Organizations, People and Environments

**ALASKA'S  
TOBACCO  
QUIT LINE**  
**1-800-QUIT-NOW**  
IT'S FREE. IT'S CONFIDENTIAL. AND IT WORKS.  
Text **READY** to 34191  
alaskaquitline.com

From January 2024 to October 2025, over **16,800 cigarette butts** were picked up. That includes **11 different city parks, 3 playgrounds, and the downtown district.**

## Quote from Local Sitkan from Survey

“Yes, I would (support a tobacco-free public parks and playgrounds policy). Our parks and playgrounds would be more enjoyable, our children can have a level of being carefree and safe.”



## Local Survey Data



**63% of Sitkans** surveyed have been exposed to secondhand smoke at a public park or playground in Sitka in the last five years.



**85% of Sitkans** surveyed would support a new tobacco-free public parks and playgrounds policy in Sitka.

*\*Local survey data gathered on Sitka playgrounds in July 2021*

## 10 Reasons Parks and Playgrounds Should be Tobacco-Free

1. Everyone has the right to breathe clean air, especially in public spaces set aside for children and adults to enjoy physical activity and the environment.
2. Secondhand smoke contains thousands of chemicals, many of which are toxic (such as formaldehyde, arsenic and lead), and is a proven cause of cancer and heart disease.
3. Cigarette and cigar butt waste is toxic. Cigarette butts leach organic chemicals and heavy metals into the environment that are toxic to fresh and salt-water fish. They are poisonous when ingested by children and other living organisms. (cigwaste.org)
4. Cigarette and cigar butt waste is not biodegradable. Filters are non-biodegradable, and while ultraviolet rays from the sun will eventually break them into smaller pieces, the toxic material never disappears. (cigwaste.org)
5. Kids should be able to play without being exposed to the toxic chemicals in secondhand smoke.
6. Cigarette and cigar butts are hazardous to children, animals and the environment. Children who ingest discarded cigarette butts are at risk for toxic poisoning, choking or being burned.
7. Cigarette and cigar butt cleanup costs impose an unnecessary burden on taxpayers.
8. Tobacco-free policies help people quit using tobacco.
9. More than 1,266 municipalities in the United States require their parks to be 100% smoke-free.
10. Tobacco-free policies help change social norms and prevent our youth from ever starting to use tobacco.

# Breathe Easy

## IN TOBACCO-FREE PARKS

### BENEFITS OF TOBACCO-FREE PARKS:

- Promotes clean, fresh air
- Family-friendly
- Encourages a tobacco-free lifestyle
- Role-modeling healthy behaviors for our kids
- Helps reduce youth initiation of tobacco
- Reduces harmful exposure to secondhand smoke
- Protects the environment



## City Parks and Recreation Facilities

City and Borough of Sitka Parks and Recreation actively maintains and/or manages **40 parks, grounds areas, ballfields, recreation sites, trails, one remote cabin and other areas. This is a total of area of 109 acres and 10.67 miles of trail.** This includes 7 parks, 3 playgrounds, 2 recreation sites, 11 ballfields, 27 landscape areas and grounds (flower beds, ornamental trees and shrubs around Sitka's public buildings and other public areas), the Kaisei-Marui interpretive memorial site, Tom Young Cabin, the City Cemetery and 10.67 miles of trail. Total turf equals 27.2 acres (1,186,661 sq. ft.).

**Lawns, Medians and Green Areas: 1,186,661 square feet** throughout sites listed. Requires weekly mowing and maintenance for seven months out of the year.

**Twenty-seven Landscape Areas and Grounds** (flower beds, ornamental trees and shrubs, lawns):

Hospital, Centennial Building, Municipal Building, City/State Building, Airport, Waste Water Facility, Transfer Station, City Services Center, Baranof School(2), Sitka High School, Keet Gooshi Heen, Sawmill Cove Administration Building, Pacific High, Library, O'Connell Lightering Facility, Crescent Harbor park (2) , Crescent Lightering, Pacific High, Castle Hill parking lot, O'Connell bridge approaches, Blatchley Middle School(2), Moller Field, Firehall, Swan Lake Park, Sealing Cove, Eliason –Thomsen Harbor .

### **Eleven Ballfields and Associated Facilities:**

Baranof (.2 acres) - Backstops, benches, lights and fencing

Vilandre (2 acres) - Concession stand and restroom, scoreboard, bleachers (one set covered), batting cage, two dugouts, fencing.

Keet Gooshi Heen fields (2.2 acres) - covered bleachers(2), concession stand and restrooms, storage shed, scoreboard, dugouts, parking lots, grass fields

Kimsham Recreational Complex (15 acres) – two large and one small ballfields, one multiuse field, 4 scoreboards, 1 scorebooth, 6 dugouts, fencing,13 bleachers, grass fields, Krueger Field bleach cover, Krueger Field scorebooth, soccer and SHS softball storage sheets.

Mt. Edgecumbe Field (1 Acre) - 2 dugouts, scoring booth, fencing

Moller Ballfields, Playgrounds and Park (14.86 acres) – synthetic turf baseball and football/soccer field, 2 dugouts, 2 bull pens, scoreboard, track, 6 bleachers (2 covered), scoreboard, 1 batting cage, 1 concession stand/restroom, 3 parking areas, 1 covered picnic area, 1 restroom, 4 storage sheds, fencing, 6 field lights, 2 tot lots.



## **Parks, Playgrounds and Recreation Sites:**

Crescent Harbor, Moller (2), - play equipment, fencing, surfacing material.

Tony Hrebar Shooting Range (4 acres) - shooting ranges and shelters (3), shooting tables (14), garbage cans, parking area, vaulted restroom

Granite Creek Recreation Area (7 acres) - asphalt 24' x 150' landing strip for remote control planes, golf course is on City land and City funds were used to construct portions of the golf range but it is maintained by Sitka Golf Association.

Goddard Recreation Area (3 acres) - Bath houses (2), hot tubs (2), waterline, outhouse, cistern, boardwalk trail. Access is by boat.

Pioneer Park (3.42 acres)- Main picnic shelter and two small shelters, restroom, trail, benches (5), street lights (2), water spigot, parking lots and barriers, fence and grills (6 various styles), lawn.

Whale Park (12 acres)- boardwalk trail, staircases and railings, gazebos (3), uncovered platform, parking lot, restroom, whale sculpture, viewing binoculars (4), interpretive signs, drinking fountain, lawn.

Swan Lake Park (22 acres with lake)- picnic tables (3), benches (7), pathway, fence, flood lights, signs, lawn, Swan Lake Dock

Turnaround Park (3 acres) - fence, path, picnic tables (2), concrete turnaround ramp, lawn; Filipino community bench; Skate Park (6800 sq ft) – concrete facility with bowl and street features and cover; Rotary Gazebo, Fenced Dog Park.

Crescent Park (2.9 acres) - picnic shelters (4), walkway, breakwater spur, benches (13) picnic tables, landscaping, parking lots, play sculptures, restroom, lawn; Crescent Basketball and Tennis Courts

Moller Park (included under ballfields)



## **Trails (10.67 miles):**

Cross (4.2 miles) - aggregate surfacing material and treated wood edging, bridges, stairs. Multiuse 8' wide pathway from Sitka High School to Kramer Drive.

Thimbleberry- Heart Lake Trails (1.8. miles) - aggregate surface with treated wood edging, bridges, docks.

Path of Hope: (1400 feet)- Landscaping, pathways, benches, inspirational messages, artwork/sculpture.

Medivje Lake (1 mile) - undeveloped trail.

Pioneer Park, Swan Lake Park, Goddard, Moller, Whale Park and Turnaround Park (4,815 feet) - All but Whale Park have urban aggregate paths.

Sitka Seawalk and Breakwater spur: (3500 feet) – yellow cedar boardwalk and 8' concrete sidewalk with paver band.



**Misc. Facilities and Misc. Responsibilities :**

Tom Young Cabin( 2 acres) – 17' x 24' Pan Abode cabin, with deck and outhouse; accessible by boat.

City Cemetary (2.5 acres) - trees and lawn

Kaisei-Marui Interpretive Site at Sealing Cove – interpretive sign and monument, anchor artifact, shelter, picnic table.

Other Areas of CBS Parks Division Responsibility: SMC, Indian River Road, Harbor Mtn. By-pass and other roadway litter sweeps, tree removal when any City tree falls on to private property, repair any damage to private property (lawns, rockwalls or flowerbeds) resulting from work done by City crews, help with school athletic events, volunteer activities and other public events(Fourth of July, Street Fair, holiday decorations, etc).

Sitka Tobacco-Free Parks Survey Outcomes

(100 survey responses collected)

- 1) How often do you visit public parks and playgrounds in Sitka?
  - a. Daily- **13**
  - b. Regularly - 2-3 times a week- **32**
  - c. Occasionally- 2-3 time a month- **32**
  - d. Rarely - 2-3 times a season (3 months)- **27**
- 2) Have you been exposed to secondhand smoke at a public park or playground in Sitka in the last 5 years? **Yes- 58 No- 33 Occasionally- 5 Unknown- 3 Blank- 1**
- 3) Have you encountered cigarette butt litter at a public park or playground in Sitka in the last 5 years? **Yes- 73 No- 23 Occasionally- 3 Unknown- 1**
- 4) How has tobacco use impacted you and your family's experience of Sitka's public parks and playgrounds?

**Responses:**

**Didn't bother me- 2**

**(It) Hasn't- 6**

**Nothing negative**

**Disrespectful thing, especially around playground**

**Not at all- 4**

**No- 5**

**Makes me think they should pick it up. Makes it look dirty**

**Not enjoyable but haven't had issues**

**Disgusting- 2**

**Negatively- 2**

**Hurts Nose, watery eyes**

**Secondhand smoke annoying. (Cigarette) butts easy to pick up**

**Wasn't enough to remember**

**Makes me sad that people are going through it mentally. They don't smoke because its fun.**

**They smoke because they are stressed.**

**Secondhand smoke, bad smell**

**Minimally- 6**

**Discouraging, risk for kids**

**Never really impacted me or my family**

**Just the smell**

**N/A- 5**

**It's tough to deal with the smell of cigarettes**

**Don't like secondhand smoke**

**It is always upsetting to see/smell cigarette smoking at public parks, especially when children are present, it makes that space feel unsafe, unhealthy, and unfriendly.**

**Not really**

**Frustrated me- 2**

**The smoke gives me a headache**

**I don't like the litter**

**Negative. Picked up buds (butts?)**

**Annoy(ing)- 2**

**Don't notice**

**Gross, minimally**

**Dog would get them. Children get into them**

**None- 2**

**Disheartening**

**Negatively, allergic reactions**

**Grossed out**

**Annoying while running**

**Don't like shooing dogs away from buds (butts?)**

**Doesn't bother you**

**I find it gross**

**Barely**

**Haven't really gone with family but the smell is gross**

**I don't think so**

**Not a lot of impact but seems like most people have common courtesy not to smoke around kids.**

**It hasn't impacted me at all**

**Makes me angry**

**No impact whatsoever**

**It hasn't negatively impacted my experience at parks or playgrounds**

**It makes it difficult to enjoy the time with my family or friends when someone is smoking**

**Minimal, gross, nuisance**

**Leaves park**

**Annoying. Dogs try to eat them. Highly allergic**

**Awkward- see them everywhere**

**Swan Lake has lots. Kids know not to touch, steer clear**

**Very different from back in the day- just have to deal with it everywhere**

**Annoying, can smell and say “who’s smoking”**

**We see it and have to smell like it for others’ freedoms outside, just stand upwind**

**Mother died of emphysema, don’t like the smoke**

**Smell**

**Distasteful**

**It hasn’t really**

**Yes, it’s gross**

**Haven’t seen people smoke in parks or playgrounds while I was there**

**It is discouraging to see cigarette butt litter in this town, even if it isn’t playground/parks. But more so when it is, as you are then explaining to your children to stay away and why.**

**It makes our community look bad**

**The littering and secondhand smoke**

**I have enjoyed the time I have spent smoking in Sitka’s public parks!**

**Does not look clean or appealing**

**Not negatively**

**Just the littering is what has impacted my family**

**Not really tbh**

**Wouldn’t say that it has personally affected me. Seeing cigarette butts around places with kids is never a good thing though.**

**Hate the smell**

- 5) Would you support a new tobacco-free public parks and playgrounds policy in Sitka? Why or why not? **Yes- 85 No- 8 Unsure- 4** **Playgrounds, yes/Parks, either no or unsure- 3**

**Responses:**

Probably would vote for that, but I don't see it as that much of an issue.

Sure, I think it's good to exhibit healthy habits.

Yea, cigarettes should not be around these areas. Or we should have cigarette butt trash dispensers in these areas so it's more accessible to throw away.

Yea, it's disrespectful to do around kid playgrounds.

Playground, yes, but parks I have a problem with. Picnic areas, no. I am a quitter. But kid playgrounds, yes.

Sure, generally good policy. Bad if people are smoking right next to park/playground.

Yes, come here for fun and fresh air.

Yes. Cleaner air is healthier. We come here for fresh air.

Yea, sure because of children, so they are not exposed.

Yea, it makes the area look not clean.

Yes, of course. Not enjoyable to see.

Yes, dangerous to children, inherently more unhealthy

Yes, trying to enjoy outside.

Yes. 1: isn't good for people 2: seeing litter around is bad

At work this needs to be a policy too. Yes.

Yea, (cigarette) butts easy to pick up, so discouraging to see everywhere.

Absolutely, people on the sea walk smoke and I can smell, meaning kids can smell.

Yes, I don't think that police will enforce this though. The best thing we can do is make it a policy and put mitigation factors in place. For example, cigarette butt trash cans for specifically cigarette butts. We need these everywhere.

Yes, kids shouldn't inhale.

I don't know, it hasn't affected me.

Yea, kids shouldn't smell.

Yes, I would support because the kids and other people around us has to be safe and not breathe in the smoke by other smokers.

Yes, but I want to see as their life choice if they want to quit or not.

Yes. \*Please look into smoking on sidewalk and ashtray outside of P-Bar.

No- 2

Yes, smoking doesn't need to happen in public places.

Yes, it should be that way already. Secondhand smoke is no joke.

Yes, why not.

Yes- 8

Absolutely! Children and nonsmokers should not be made subject to smoke when they have made the decision not to smoke/are not old enough.

Yes, nice to not have to smell it or see (cigarette) butts.

Yes, keep our playgrounds a healthy option for our youth.

Yeah- 3

Yes. I want the litter to be reduced.

Yes, it doesn't affect me but I'm sure it does for others.

Sure- 2

Absolutely.

No, hard to regulate. Signs would help maybe.

Yea, kids shouldn't be exposed. Prettier. Pregnant.

Possibly.

Yea, I would.

Sure, I'd back anyone who does this.

No, enough rules about it.

I think so, people have other places to smoke.

Yes, because smoking (is) gross. Kids there. 5 yr olds don't need smoke.

Yes, because I don't like pulling it out of my dog's mouth.

Yes, people and especially children should be able to enjoy a tobacco-free public parks and playgrounds. Parents shouldn't have to worry about their kids picking up cigarette buds (butts?) or having them exposed to secondhand smoke. If someone is smoking near the area, I would not take my kids in that area, making the space unusable.

Yes, kids do not need to be around smoke in public area.

I think it would be important for tobacco-free parks in town because so many people smoke around Sitka, like the secondhand smoke doesn't affect others around, especially children at parks! It's important to keep the kids healthy and way from secondhand smoke.

Yeah, good for the environment.

Sure, but there's no good way to enforce it.

Yes, so we can separate them from the kids.

I would support it in playgrounds but not public parks. Children should not be around secondhand smoke but if you are walking through the park and you don't litter, I don't mind if you smoke or not.

Sure, but I don't see a big problem with it. I rarely see smokers in the parks/playgrounds.

Playgrounds, yes. I don't know about parks.

No. It isn't SEARHC's Public Health Dept. that gets to decide whether or not citizens can smoke in our public parks.

Yes. I would support tobacco-free parks and playgrounds for the health of non-smokers, especially children.

Yes, please make this happen. I have sensitivities to smoke, and I would appreciate if there would be a tobacco-free policy in place.

I don't know. Hard to regulate.

Yes, all should be protected.

Yes! Highly allergic.

Yes, kids deserve clean air.

Yes, but don't fully live here.

Yes, sure annoying to see.

I don't know. It doesn't bother me much.

Yes, litter is bad.

Yes, don't have to smell.

Yes, the smell is gross- 2

Yes, better for people.

Yes, absolutely. Very prevalent.

Yes, I honestly already thought it was a thing.

Yes, bad for smoker and the people inhaling it who didn't ask for it.

Yes, because there are kids playing in playgrounds and shouldn't be around the smell or presence of tobacco.

Yes, I would. Our parks/playgrounds would be more enjoyable, our children can have a level of being carefree and safe.

Yes, it would make our community look amazing.

Yes of course, kids don't need to be exposed.

Yeah, to make a change in my life.

Sure, because why not?

**Yes, because healthy air is important to recreational areas.**

**No, smokers have rights.**

**Yes, because children don't need to be exposed to secondhand smoke.**

**Yeah, because children shouldn't be exposed to that.**

**Yes, there is no benefit to tobacco in public areas where younger kids are the main inhabitants. Only harm could be caused.**

**Yes, I would support it because it's important to keep those places as clean as possible.**

**Not necessary.**

**Not seen as necessary.**

**Yes, tobacco is not good for you or me.**

**Absolutely!! 😊**

Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in our survey!

## **ITEM D**

### **Review Working Group Goals**

## 2026 Commission Goals, Action Plan, and Progress Tracking

### Goals and Timelines Table

Focus Area	Goal	Measurable Target	Timeline
Mental Health & Suicide Prevention	Improve early identification of suicide risk	90% adopt validated screening tools	Dec 2026
Mental Health & Suicide Prevention	Expand access to crisis & treatment services	20% wait time reduction; 50% increase 988 awareness	Dec 2026
Mental Health & Suicide Prevention	Strengthen community-based prevention	Train 300 residents	Dec 2026
Mental Health & Suicide Prevention	Improve postvention support	100% contacted within 72 hours	July 2026
Mental Health & Suicide Prevention	Enhance data collection	Dashboard + 95% data completeness	Jun–Dec 2026
Health & Racial Equity	Standardize equity-related data	100% partners collect demographic/SDOH	Dec 2026
Health & Racial Equity	Reduce inequities in outcomes	10% reduction in disparities	Dec 2026
Health & Racial Equity	Build workforce equity capacity	Train all partners	Dec 2026
Health & Racial Equity	Increase community engagement	30% increase participation	Dec 2026
Health & Racial Equity	Improve policies & systems	3 policy improvements annually	Annual

### Draft Action Plan

#### 1. Governance & Structure

- Establish Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Workgroup
- Establish Health & Racial Equity Workgroup

## 2. Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Actions

- Standardize screening and workflows
- Improve access and crisis support
- Deliver quarterly QPR/ASIST trainings
- Implement postvention protocol
- Launch data dashboard and reporting cadence

## 3. Health & Racial Equity Actions

- Adopt equity frameworks (CDC CORE)
- Standardize demographic and SDOH data
- Conduct annual equity training
- Strengthen community partnerships
- Review policies annually using equity lens

## Progress Tracking Plan

### 1. Tools

- Shared quarterly scorecard
- Online dashboard
- Annual public report

### 2. Metrics

- Screening rates, crisis utilization, wait times
- Training completions
- Postvention compliance
- Community engagement participation
- Disparity indicators

### 3. Review Cadence

- Quarterly workgroup review
- Semiannual Commission strategy review
- Annual comprehensive evaluation

### 4. CQI Approach

- Use PDSA cycles
- Implement corrective actions as needed
- Reassess training and partnerships annually