



Parks and Recreation Committee Agenda

Monday, November 10, 2025, 12:00 PM
Harrigan Centennial Hall, 330 Harbor Drive

Members: Chair – Ben Hughey, Vice-Chair Candace Rutledge, James Poulson
Brandon Marx, Katherine Prussian, Steve Black, Manoj Battar
Assembly Liaison: Kevin Mosher

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

III. AGENDA CHANGES

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. October 14 and October 21

V. REPORTS

Chair:

Members:

City Staff:

Assembly Liaison:

Other(s): Sitka Trail Works

VI. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(For items OFF the agenda - not to exceed 3 minutes)*

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

B. Discussion / Direction on redesign of the Seawalk interpretive signs

C. Discussion / Direction on memorial benches

D. Discussion / Direction / Decision of Tongass Forest Plan Revision

E. Discussion / Direction / Decision on rescheduling the December 9 Parks and Recreation Committee meeting

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

X. ADJOURNMENT

Item A – Approval of Minutes



Parks and Recreation Committee Agenda

Tuesday, October 14, 2025, 12:00 PM
Harrigan Centennial Hall, 330 Harbor Drive

Members: Chair – Ben Hughey, Vice-Chair Candace Rutledge, James Poulson
Brandon Marx, Katherine Prussian, Steve Black
Assembly Liaison: Kevin Mosher

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hughey called the meeting to order at approximately 12:02 pm

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Ben Hughey, Brandon Marx, James Poulson, Katherin Prussian, Steven Black, Candace Rutledge

Absent:

Assembly Liaison: Kevin Mosher

Staff Present: Deputy Municipal Clerk Holley Bayne, Parks and Recreation Coordinator Kevin Knox, and Grounds Maintenance Supervisor Kent Smith

Others: None.

III. AGENDA CHANGES

None.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. August 12, 2025

Marx moved to approve the August 12, 2025, meeting minutes. Motion passed 6-0.

V. REPORTS

Chair: None.

Members: None.

City Staff: Kent Smith summarized current projects, bids, and planned trail repairs. Kevin Knox spoke about staffing shortages, summarized current programs, and reminded budget season was beginning. Bayne provided a summary of open seats on the commission and applications received.

Assembly Liaison: Mosher thanked those who helped on proposition #1.

Other(s): Sitka Trail Works - Hughey summarized volunteer work with Sitka Trail Works.

VI. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(For items OFF the agenda - not to exceed 3 minutes)*

Aaron Prussian with Sitkans for Community Outdoor Recreation Enhancement (SCORE) gave an update of current and upcoming projects, and expressed a desire for more people to join SCORE.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

B. Discussion/Direction/Decision on the Cooperative Resource Management Agreement with Alaska DNR for lands/trails/dock at Baranof Warm Springs

Knox provided an introduction on the proposed Cooperative Resource Management Agreement with Alaska DNR for Baranof Warm Springs. The agreement would let CBS manage commercial permits, remove the need for separate DNR permits and lower operator costs. Trail maintenance by CBS would be optional, with land and water rights remaining with the state. Members noted no downsides and agreed it would streamline management. The goal of this discussion today was to bring a recommendation from the committee to the assembly meeting tonight.

Poulson moved to recommend approval of the Cooperative Resource Management Agreement. Motion passed 6-0.

C. Discussion and public comment on the 2026 Commercial Recreational Land Use Plan

The committee discussed public feedback on the draft 2026 Commercial Recreational Land Use Plan. Key topics included guide limits, carrying capacity, and balanced access for local operators. Members discussed potential limits on group size, weekly use, and water taxi visits at Baranof and Goddard. Concerns were raised about restricting local businesses and ensuring community input before finalizing the plan. Staff noted the plan allows flexibility for existing permits and desire to move forward. The committee reached general consensus to move forward with refinements and to bring a recommendation forward to the assembly.

D. Discussion / Direction / Decision on rescheduling the November 11 Parks and Recreation Committee meeting

The members expressed consensus to reschedule their next meeting to the same day that the assembly decided to reschedule their November 11 meeting.

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

None.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting would be as decided in item D, at noon in Harrigan Centennial Hall. Hearing no objection, Chair Hughey called the meeting to adjournment at 12:04 PM.

Attest:
Holley Bayne, Deputy Municipal Clerk

DRAFT



Parks and Recreation Committee Minutes Tuesday, October 21, 2025, 6:00 p.m. Sitka High School Library, 1000 Lake Street

Members: Chair – Ben Hughey, Vice-Chair Candace Rutledge, James Poulson, Brandon Marx, Steve Black, Katherine Prussian, Manoj Battar
Assembly Liaison: Kevin Mosher

SPECIAL MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hughey called the meeting to order at approximately 6:07 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Ben Hughey, Brandon Marx (via zoom), Katherin Prussian, Steven Black, Candace Rutledge, Manoj Battar

Absent: James Poulson (excused)

Assembly Liaison: Kevin Mosher

Staff Present: Deputy Municipal Clerk Holley Bayne, Parks and Recreation Coordinator Kevin Knox, Recreation Activities Specialist Elle Campbell, and Planning and Community Development Director Amy Ainslie

Others: None.

III. AGENDA CHANGES

None.

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(For items OFF the agenda - Not to Exceed 3 Minutes)*

Jay Erie spoke on ADA access to Cross Trail.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS – 2026 COMMERCIAL RECREATIONAL LAND USE PLAN

A. Local Trails & Water Access

Public Comment: Kealoha Harmon commented.

The members discussed the item and supported removing guide limits.

B. Thimbleberry Trail

Public Comment: John Murray commented on annual review options. Kealoha Harmon spoke in support of including percentages for small operators.

The members discussed this area has higher allocation for commercial use, yet lower impact. A short discussion was had about fractional allocations.

C. Baranof Warm Springs

Public Comment: Jay Erie desired adding the grotto and etiquette signs. John Murray commented on overuse of the area. Mike Trotter commented on maximum group size. Luke Bastian spoke of Goddard permit levels, consideration of long-range charters, and guide usage at Baranof Warm Springs.

The members and staff discussed land ownership, accommodation of long-range charters, and clarification of the DNR/CBS land use agreement.

D. Goddard Hot Springs

Public Comment: Brandon Finn commented on small operations usage. John Murray spoke of Goddard history, allowing commercial use, and needed maintenance improvements. Jay Erie recommended a third tub. Luke Bastian commented on Goddard history allowing commercial use.

The members discussed preventing overcrowding and managing both local and commercial use. They agreed on limiting group sizes (with some favoring four instead of six) and adding rules on etiquette. A special condition was proposed for operators to guide clients to use only one tub at a time. There was some support for exceptions for non-motorized vessels under 25 feet, but more public input was desired. The group also debated options for commercial use, and agreed to be prepared to present the assembly with several options on October 28.

E. Fees

Public Comment: Luke Bastian suggested applying fees towards site maintenance. Bethany Lowrance recommended allocating fees to site infrastructure.

During group discussion, Ainslie clarified the changes approved by the committee thus far. She relayed that the Sitka Tribe of Alaska requested the new fee structure to be delayed one year.

F. Other Plan Sections & Provisions

Public Comment: Andrea Thomas questioned prior year's limits. Kealoha Harmon questioned when the permit applications would be available.

Ainslie clarified there was no prior year data to compare, however future versions of the plan will include a summary tracking changes over time. The timing of permit application availability depends on Assembly adoption of the plan, with the goal of permits being available mid-late November. Staff will issue permits, not the Parks and Recreation Committee. It was suggested to add fractional group sizes and criteria for evaluating applicants, including public comments and compliance history.

G. Plan Recommendation

Public Comment: John Murray spoke in support of the plan accommodating all users. Bethany Lowrance thanked the committee.

Ainslie summarized the change log.

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

Jay Erie questioned payment for dock usage at Baranof Warm Springs and commented on the poor grid condition.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no objection, Chair Hughey called the meeting to adjournment at 7:52 p.m.

Attest:
Holley Bayne, Deputy Municipal Clerk

Item C – Discussion/Direction on memorial benches

MEMORANDUM

To: Sitka Parks & Recreation Committee
From: Chair, Ben Hughey
Date: November 6th, 2025
Subject: Policy for Donation and Installation of Memorial Benches

The lack of a formal policy for accepting, installing, and maintaining memorial benches on existing trails has been a longstanding issue, leading to inconsistent practices. Outside of new trail construction (previously managed by Sitka Trail Works), the City currently lacks a process to:

- Determine the need and allowable locations for new benches.
- Efficiently receive donations and coordinate with donors.
- Manage the extensive associated work, including plaque design, bench ordering, and installation.

For years, specifically since the completion of the Phase 6 Cross Trail, we have been discussing solutions with Public Works. The goal is to establish a streamlined, efficient, and consistent process that achieves the following:

- Standardized bench design across the entire trail system.
- A streamlined donation process for both initial placement and future replacement.
- Clear communication and expectations for all donors.
- Efficient use of the CBS budget for bench maintenance.

The proposed policy below adheres to the CBS ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE NO. 23.02-01 (Applying for and Accepting Grants and Donations), specifically Scenario 3 (Funding for construction/improvement of infrastructure that has already been contemplated). Given that private donations for a single bench are typically under \$10,000, the process is intended to primarily require administrative approval.

Administrative Policy No. _____

Memorial Benches

PURPOSE

This policy outlines the process for accepting and replacing memorial benches at municipal facilities and trails managed by the City and Borough of Sitka (CBS).

POLICY

Currently, CBS hosts memorial benches in municipal parks and trails.

GUIDELINES

Bench Location and Design

- CBS will develop an annual roster of locations suitable for benches. New bench locations will be added sparingly.
- CBS staff will present the roster for approval by the Parks & Recreation Committee annually.
- All new benches will be consistent with the recycled plastic “cedar” plank style used in the Starrigavan extension (Phase 6) of the Cross Trail construction. CBS will set guidelines for plaque size. Plaques should be memorial in nature and not designed to advertise for a business or organization.
- Benches to be installed in new locations will require concrete slab foundations. The costs associated with installation of concrete slabs and bench installation will be invoiced to the donor.

Bench Donation

- The opportunity to dedicate a memorial bench will be listed on the CBS website and individuals may be added to the first-come, first-serve list upon request.
- Donors can choose from a predetermined list of available locations for their bench, which will also be publicly listed.
- A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) will be signed by the donor(s) acknowledging CBS's right to relocate, remove, or replace the bench as deemed necessary for maintenance or facility improvements.
- Donors of existing benches will be contacted when their bench needs replacement and offered the opportunity to contribute to a new bench at the same location.
- CBS reserves the right to delegate coordination of the memorial bench to a third party, such as nonprofit partners who support maintenance and development of CBS infrastructure such as Sitka Trail Works (STW) and Sitka Recreation Foundation (SRF) may facilitate third-party donations, guided by a MOA with CBS.
- The nonprofit partner may facilitate the donation process, collecting funds, ordering the bench and plaque (if desired), and reimbursing CBS or a contractor for installation costs.
- The nonprofit partner will determine the price of the bench based on supplies and installation costs at the time. Donors will contribute an additional amount above cost of installation, to be dedicated toward maintenance and enhancements of municipal facilities by the nonprofit partner.

**Item D – Discussion/Direction/Decision of Tongass Forest
Plan Revision**

November 10, 2025
Monique Nelson, Forest Supervisor
Tongass National Forest Supervisor's Office
648 Mission Street, Suite 110
Ketchikan, AK 99901

Subject: Input on the Forest Plan Revision from the Sitka Parks and Recreation Committee

Dear Forest Supervisor Nelson,

The Sitka Parks and Recreation Committee, as the volunteer citizen advisory board on municipal lands management, respectfully submits this letter to request meaningful and structured input into the ongoing revision of the Tongass National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. As a formal advisory body to the City and Borough of Sitka (CBS), our members possess unique, on-the-ground knowledge regarding local recreational needs and the economic well-being of our community. We request that the US Forest Service (USFS) to give our committee timely and formal opportunities to contribute to the planning process.

The health of Sitka's recreation-based economy necessitates a multi-jurisdictional approach to land management in the revised Forest Plan. Key infrastructure, such as the popular commercial use trails like Herring Cove to Beaver Lake, Thimbleberry to Heart, and Mosquito Cove, weave between City, State, and Federal ownership. Effective management of these vital assets requires the USFS to look beyond property borders and prioritize coordination with CBS.

Furthermore, the revised plan must balance economic growth, community use, and essential conservation. The Sitka Parks and Recreation Committee urges the USFS to adopt a plan that supports sustainable tourism growth and local residents' use of the forest for recreation, subsistence food, and traditional practices.

We stand ready to assist the US Forest Service in developing a balanced and sustainable Tongass Forest Plan that serves both the national interest and the specific needs of the Sitka community.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these critical issues.

Sincerely,

Ben Hughey, Chair

On behalf of the Sitka Parks and Recreation Committee

City and Borough of Sitka