



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Meeting Minutes Tourism Commission

Officers: Chair Jeremy Plank; Vice Chair Ian Dempster; and Secretary Carol Bryant-Martin

Members: Devon Calvin; Vaughn Hazel; Bethany Lowrance; Alana Peterson; and Rachel Roy, Visit Sitka (Ex Officio)

Staff Liaison: Amy Ainslie, P&CD Director (Ex Officio); and Jessica Earnshaw, Deputy Municipal Clerk

Assembly Liaison: Chris Ystad

March 13, 2025

6:00 P.M.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Vice Chair Dempster called the Sitka Tourism Commission meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Secretary Carol Bryant-Martin moderated the meeting from 6:25 to 6:50 p.m. as Vice Chair Dempster stepped away from the meeting briefly.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Carol Bryant-Martin; Devon Calvin; Vaughn Hazel; Bethany Lowrance; Alana Peterson; Jeremy Plank (Via Zoom); and Ian Dempster Riley; and Rachel Roy (Ex Officio).

Absent: None

Staff: Amy Ainslie, Planning & Community Development Director; and Jess Earnshaw, Deputy Municipal Clerk

Public: Chris McGraw, Sitka Cruise Terminal; Ryan Harris, Sitka Bike & Hike, and John Stein, Retired

Secretary Bryant-Martin called roll. She confirmed quorum was present.

III. CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA

No agenda changes were made.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

M-Peterson/S-Lowrance moved to approve the minutes dated February 6, 2025. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. TBMP Discussion

The Commission members discussed the TBMP document based on best practices in Juneau. In addition, the members spoke about the draft TBMP document for Sitka. While the Sitka draft has merit, the members agreed it is necessary to add a clause about water sports (jet ski/snorkel), obtain input from community members and businesses before finalizing, as well as identify a champion to field TBMP related phone calls and online feedback at the local level in Sitka. Committee members elaborated on how the pilot program does not need to be paid for by the City of Sitka as it can be an independent program funded by businesses in the area. Alana Peterson requested time for input from the Tribe. Rachel Roy suggested obtaining feedback from local businesses and the tourism industry.

Public Comment: Vice Chair Dempster recognized members of the public to speak. Chris McGraw with the Sitka Sound Dock offered to run a local TBMP pilot program for summer 2025, which would include

a hotline and an online platform for comments. Ryan Harris with Sitka Bike and Hike asked for clarifications related to noise ordinances, trail conditions, and maintenance.

Motion: M-Plank/S-Lowrance moved for the Commission to support Chris McGraw's implementation of a local TBMP pilot program in Sitka, and for the Commission to facilitate input from the tribe and the public. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

B. 2025 Downtown Traffic Management

Commission members reviewed street closure materials and options to help alleviate the daily surge of visitors downtown. The members discussed possibly increasing the number of passengers for street closures from 5,000 to 6,500 and Chris McGraw's proposed app for bus schedules. The Commission decided to try not closing streets this tour season after discussing issues related to congestion when driving downtown during road closures on high visitor days. In addition, the Commission members agreed that the bus app serves as a solution to alleviate overcrowding at Centennial Hall, which could reduce volume and spread the flow of ship passengers, both inbound and outbound from downtown.

Motion: M-Lowrance/S-Plank moved to recommend not executing closures of Lincoln Street for the 2025 season, and to seek other mitigation measures such as pedestrian safety guides. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

C. Review of Draft Sitka 2025-2027 3-Year Strategic Marketing Plan

Commission members reviewed the draft Sitka 2025-2027 3-Year Strategic Marketing Plan prepared by Visit Sitka based on a workshop with key local leaders this past fall. The public comment period was to extend through the March 24th, and members suggested extending the time to allow for more public feedback due to the island-wide internet outage in March. Roy stated that once feedback was incorporated, the final document would come before the body in May for review and a recommendation for adoption.

D. Transit Safety and Efficiency Efforts

The Commission members discussed forward-thinking plans to address transit safety and efficiency efforts, which include addressing bus routes, e-bikes, and pedestrian congestion and jaywalking downtown. To date, the City had not been able to hire pedestrian guards to monitor foot traffic flow downtown but planned to make a renewed effort to do so for the 2025 season. Safety around crossing Sawmill Creek at the Alaska Raptor Center was also discussed, and members acknowledged changes or modifications would be required. Involvement from the State of Alaska Department of Transportation as SMC is a state highway. Commission members agreed visitor use of e-bikes was a top community priority to manage, and agreed to set a public meeting on the matter in May.

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

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Ainslie provided a wrap-up of actions based on talking points before the meeting adjourned. The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 pm by unanimous voice vote.

Minutes By: Carol Bryant-Martin, Secretary