



# 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

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May 8, 2025

6:00 P.M.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

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### I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Jeremy Plank called meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

### II. ROLL CALL

**Present:** Carol Bryant-Martin; Devon Calvin; Vaughn Hazel; Bethany Lowrance; Alana Peterson; Jeremy Plank; Ian Dempster (arrived approximately 6:30) and Rachel Roy (Ex Officio).

**Absent:** None

**Staff:** Amy Ainslie, P&CD Director; and Jessica Earnshaw, Deputy Municipal Clerk

**Public:** Larry Edwards

Secretary Bryant-Martin confirmed quorum was present.

### III. CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA

No agenda changes were made.

### IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

M-Lowrance/Peterson moved to approve the minutes dated April 10, 2025. Motion passed 6-0 by voice vote.

### V. NEW BUSINESS

#### A. Finalization of 2025 TBMP Guidelines

The Commission members discussed the draft Sitka TBMP Handbook. Commissioners discussed feedback from the public received at a public meeting and through email. Primary concerns from the public centered on e-bikes and helicopter tours. On the topic of bikes and e-bikes, Roy discussed other efforts Visit Sitka was making such as the hiking and bike guide maps that could also be utilized for TBMP, and Ainslie provided information on the city's commercial land use permitting process. On helicopter tours, the Commission agreed that more research was needed to see whether there were other regulations (such as those from FAA) that would make helicopter tours infeasible in Sitka, but that provisions regarding helicopters should remain in the TBMP handbook in the meantime. The Commission made minor amendments regarding snorkeling tours, motorized vessels (jet skis), non-motorized vessels (sea kayaks), and whale training. Peterson stated that STA was still in the process of forming its ad-hoc tourism committee, STA had not been able to make a formal recommendation on the document and that as their representative, she did not feel could vote in favor on the document on its behalf but did not object to it moving forward. Ainslie stated that the TBMP handbook included provisions for an annual review, and that STA could continue to review the document in the meantime and make recommendations for its 2026 implementation.

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**M-Lowrance/S-Bryant-Martin moved to approve the TBMP Handbook with edits as discussed. Motion passed 5-1 by voice vote.**

**B. Review and Recommendation of the Visit Sitka 3-Year Strategic Marketing Plan (2025-2027)**

Commission members reviewed the draft marketing plan. Roy stated that the plan was one of the final deliverables the Chamber was providing as Visit Sitka and was intended to set the stage for a new Visit Sitka operator. Roy also discussed the various opportunities for public input on the marketing plan that had been offered. Commissioners appreciated the emphasis on year-round travel, focus on independent travelers, and year-by-year action planning. Peterson again stated that STA had not been able to convene its ad-hoc tourism committee and therefore had not been able to make a formal recommendation on the document, and that as their representative, did not feel that could vote in favor of the marketing plan but did not object to it moving forward.

**M-Lowrance/S-Bryant-Martin moved to recommend adoption of the Visit Sitka 3-Year Strategic Marketing Plan. Motion passed 5-1 by voice vote.**

**C. E-Bike Public Meeting**

The Commission discussed scheduling a work session with e-bike rental and tour operators, as well as Sitka Trail Works, to learn more details about e-bikes and discuss potential solutions for community concerns. Ainslie suggested that this could take place on May 20, 2025. Members requested a summary of public comments, recommended actions, and state regulations related to e-bikes, Ainslie stated that would provide those materials in the work session packet.

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

Chair Plank recognized Larry Edwards to discuss his May 8, 2025 memo presented to the Commission.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

Amy Ainslie provided a wrap-up of actions before the meeting adjourned. Ainslie also noted that this would be Earnshaw's last commission meeting, as she would be relocating out of state. The Commission thanked Earnshaw for her work and wished her well in her new position.

**M-Peterson/S-Lowrance moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:04 p.m. Motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.**

Minutes By: Carol Bryant-Martin, Secretary