



# 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); Holly Bayne, Deputy City Clerk.

**Assembly Liaison:** Chris Ystad

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June 12, 2025

6:00 P.M.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

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### I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Jeremy Plank called the Sitka Tourism Commission meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

### II. ROLL CALL

**Present:** Carol Bryant-Martin; Devon Calvin; Ian Dempster; Vaughn Hazel; Bethany Lowrance; and Jeremy Plank.

**Absent:** Alana Peterson (excused); Rachel Roy (excused).

**Staff:** Amy Ainslie, P&CD Director.

**Public:** Victoria Siegel (Visit Sitka), Lisa Busch, Tonia Puletau-Lang, Shelby Ellingsen, Larry Edwards

Secretary Bryant-Martin confirmed quorum was present.

### III. CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA

None.

### IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

None.

### V. NEW BUSINESS

#### A. Report and discussion on potential art projects and locations

Commission members reviewed a public art project initiative presented by Lisa Busch. In her presentation, Busch stated that she had worked with Betty (Gray) Edwards with the Greater Sitka Arts Council on this proposal, provided examples of public art in other communities, discussed the benefits of public art, potential installation types and locations in Sitka, and outlined a potential process for consideration of these installations. Commissioners provided positive feedback. No action was taken.

#### B. Review and recommendation of the response received to the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Visit Sitka contract and next steps

Upon reviewing the RFP response from Orca // Killer Creative (the only response CBS had received to the RFP), the Assembly had requested additional review by the Commission. However, Ainslie reported that Orca // Killer Creative had withdrawn their RFP response prior to the Commission meeting. The Commission then discussed potential next steps on securing an operator for Visit Sitka services.

Public comment was made by Tonia Puletau-Lang, who stated that dividing the scope of work for Visit Sitka services into smaller pieces may entice interest from more local organizations, but that it could be difficult to isolate services given the significant overlap between areas such as destination marketing

and destination management. Puletau-Lang also noted that long-term contractual relationships such as those achieved through a memorandum or agreement rather than a professional services contract was more typical for these types of services to ensure consistency and longevity. Shelby Ellingsen with Element, a marketing firm based in Sitka and Anchorage, also testified that Element was at the time a subcontractor for Visit Sitka, and had continued interest in Visit Sitka related work. Ellingsen also voiced the importance of local knowledge and passion in accomplishing Visit Sitka's work.

The Commission discussed dividing the scope of work into more discrete services or areas, whether there could be a local preference, and recommended issuing a "Request for Information" to gain market information on how the services could be divided and managed. No action was taken.

**C. Discussion and recommendation on Lincoln Street closures for the remainder of the 2025 visitor season**

The Commission discussed the pros and cons of street closures in downtown Sitka. Lowrance stated she had observed less jaywalking with the implementation of pedestrian safety guides. Plank commented that bathroom access with temporary restrooms and the overall foot traffic flow of people have improved based on measures implemented by CBS. Public comment was given by Larry Edwards, who stated that the placement of the temporary restrooms had reduced parking which particularly impacted access to a food store. The Commission discussed the continued need for permanent public restrooms, which Ainslie stated could be accommodated during the Lincoln Street project if the street was reconfigured to make more space available for a permanent restroom.

**M-Lowrance/S-Bryant-Martin moved to continue the trial of leaving Lincoln Street open for the remainder of the 2025 visitor season and review at the end the season. The motion passed 6-0 by voice vote.**

**D. Discussion and recommendation on changing the negotiated agreement with the City and Borough of Sitka and the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal (SSCT) from a memorandum of understanding to a memorandum of agreement.**

Plank introduced the item stating that he had heard community concerns that the existing agreement between CBS and the SSCT to manage cruise visitation lacked legal strength and permanence due to the nature of the agreement being a memorandum of understanding (MOU), rather than something more binding such as a memorandum of agreement (MOA). Commissioners discussed the potential of shifting the current agreement from an MOU to an MOA, and what the process would be. Calvin expressed concern about locking the community into the cruise visitation numbers and other provisions of the existing agreement through an MOA. Public comment was given by Larry Edwards, who shared Calvin's concerns and wished to see the Tourism Commission have a more active role in shaping a new agreement.

**M-Hazel/S-Lowrance moved to recommend that CBS explore options for changing from its current negotiated agreement (an MOU) with the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal to a legally binding document (potentially an MOA) and outline a public process led by the Tourism Commission for input and consideration of any new agreement if pursued. The motion passed 6-0 by voice vote.**

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

None.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Plank asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:44 p.m. M-Lowrance/S-Hazel to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

Minutes By: Carol Bryant-Martin, Secretary