



# CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

## Final 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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September 11, 2025

6:00 P.M.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

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### I. CALL TO ORDER

As the Chair and Vice Chair were absent from the meeting, Ainslie called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM and asked Commission members present to appoint an Acting Chair for the meeting.

M-Hazel/S-Calvin moved to appoint Carol Bryant-Martin as the Acting Chair. Motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.

### II. ROLL CALL

**Present:** Carol Bryant-Martin; Devon Calvin; Vaughn Hazel; Alana Peterson (virtual), Rachel Roy, Chris Ystad

**Absent:** Ian Dempster (excused), Bethany Lowrance (excused), Jeremy Plank

**Staff:** Amy Ainslie, P&CD Director; Jacqueline Kincaid, Tourism Manager

**Public:** Shannon Haugland (Sitka Sentinel)

Secretary Bryant-Martin confirmed quorum was present. Kincaid introduced herself to the Commission.

### III. CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA

No agenda changes were made.

### IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

M-Calvin/S-Vaughn moved to approve the August 14, 2025, meeting minutes. The motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.

### V. NEW BUSINESS

#### A. Review of draft Commercial Recreational Land Use Plan and upcoming public input opportunities

Ainslie provided an introduction, and noted that the Commission had discussed commercial recreational land use planning and permitting during its previous discussions regarding the Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP) guidelines. Ainslie described the work to date on the municipal code revision that had previously been adopted by the Assembly and would take effect on November 1, 2025, as well as the process for creating the plan. Of note, Ainslie summarized plan inputs including consultation with other joint-jurisdiction agencies, data collection on current use levels and trends of municipal recreation assets, and public engagement. Ainslie explained that the purpose of the Commission's review of the plan was to increase awareness of upcoming opportunities for public input, and for the Commission to have an opportunity to comment on the plan. No formal action was required

as the plan was to be recommended for adoption by the Parks & Recreation Committee and adopted by the Assembly.

Peterson noted that she had discussed the plan at a recent Tribal Council meeting and asked if government-to-government consultation would take place; Ainslie responded that she and her staff had been in contact with staff members at Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA) about review of the plan, and would adjust the timeline for plan adoption to accommodate additional time for STA review if needed.

Bryant-Martin asked how the permit issuance process would work. Ainslie explained how the commercial carrying capacities identified in the plan would serve as limits for the number of clients using each identified asset, the difference between special guidance versus conditions, and the process for issuing permits when demand for use exceeds plan limits. Roy also asked for clarification regarding permit issuance, and how public hearings for permit applications would be handled recognizing overlap in both staff and commissions/committees between tourism and parks and recreation. Ainslie clarified that permits would be issued administratively going forward in accordance with the adopted plan, but that future plan updates could include more substantive Tourism Commission review and input. Roy discussed the overlap between the plan and the TBMP program, stated that she would help increase awareness through the Visit Sitka mailing list, and expressed appreciation for plan provisions regarding collaboration with operators. In response to a question from Hazel, Ainslie stated that there were approximately 25 permit holders in 2025, and described recent efforts on enforcement particularly at Baranof Warm Springs. Commissioners also had questions regarding permitting use of streets and sidewalks in the downtown area; Ainslie stated that the plan did not at the time have specific provisions for walking tours outside of usual recreational areas such as parks and trails, but that may be added in future. Ainslie also described the process of arriving at commercial carrying capacities in the plan, noting that the plan largely aligned with US Forest Service group size limits for joint-jurisdiction areas and used community survey input to determine limits in other areas. Commission discussion regarding current use data collection was also had. No action was taken.

#### **B. End-of-Season Community Survey**

Ainslie reviewed the target timeline for offering an end-of-season survey for the community, and questions previously asked when the survey was offered in 2022. Ainslie also reviewed examples of community surveys offered in Juneau. Calvin asked if staff had recommendations for new or additional survey questions; Ainslie responded that the only item she knew needed to be added were questions about Lincoln Street closures, as the Assembly had requested this information following the decision to leave the street open in 2025. Bryant-Martin suggested, and Commissioners agreed, that questions about TBMP be added. Peterson suggested making clear to potential respondents how their input would be used in future decision making. Commissioners further agreed that it would be important to have questions regarding the crossing guards deployed in 2025, temporary restrooms, and trash management. No action was taken.

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

None.

#### **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion:** M-Calvin/S-Hazel moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 PM. The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

Minutes By: Amy Ainslie, Staff Liaison