



Tourism Commission Agenda

Thursday, July 10, 2025, 6:00 PM
Harrigan Centennial Hall, 330 Harbor Drive

Members: Devon Calvin, Ian Dempster, Vaughn Hazel
Bethany Lowrance, Carol Bryant-Martin, Alana Peterson, Jeremy Plank
Rachel Roy (ex officio), Amy Ainslie (ex officio)

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

III. CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

May 8, 2025 meeting minutes & June 12, 2025 meeting minutes

V. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Review of a municipal petition to the Alaska State Alcoholic Beverage Control Board to increase the number of restaurant and eating place licenses in Sitka
- B. Review of a zoning change regulating the development of new cruise docks

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

VII. ADJOURNMENT



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

May 8, 2025

6:00 P.M.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

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.

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



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

June 12, 2025

6:00 P.M.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

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.

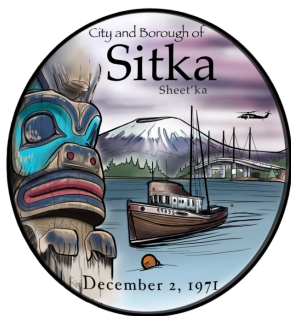
V. PERSONS TO BE HEARD (*For items ON or OFF the agenda and not to exceed 3 minutes*)

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



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Chair Plank and Tourism Commission Members

From: Amy Ainslie, Planning & Community Development Director *AA*

Date: July 3, 2025

Subject: Petition for Additional Restaurant & Eating Place Licenses

Assembly members Thor Christianson and Chris Ystad are seeking to co-sponsor a petition to the State of Alaska Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Board to increase the number of Restaurant or Eating Place Licenses (REPLs) available in Sitka.

REPL Information:

- Only “bona fide restaurants” (i.e. the principal activity is consumption of food, and a variety of food items appropriate for meals are provided) can apply
- The license allows restaurants/eating places to sell brewed beverages and wine on the licensed premises (i.e. does not allow sale of “hard liquor”)
- Without petition by a municipality, communities cannot have more than 1 REPL per 1,500 permanent resident population.

Under Alaska Statute 01.11.405, qualifying municipalities may submit a resolution to the ABC Board petitioning for the issuance of additional REPLs if it demonstrates and satisfies the following requirements – each are listed here with Sitka’s response to each:

1. The municipality serves as a center for commercial activity within and outside the boundaries of the municipality by providing goods and services to a population greater than the permanent resident population within the boundaries of the municipality.
 - a. Center for commercial activity: Seafood, health care
 - b. Permanent Resident Population: 8,063 per AMCO 2024 report
 - c. Visitor Population: Over 650,000 – approximately 590,000 cruise visitors and 60,000 independent travelers per Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska and Visit Sitka estimates
 - d. Non-Resident Worker Population: Upwards of 3,600 – Alaska Dept of Labor 2023 report identified 3,498 local Sitka workers. SEDA State of Sitka’s Economy 2024 report identified 2023 peak employment of 7,125 workers.
2. Maintains a local law enforcement department: Yes
3. Exercises planning or land use authority: Yes

4. At time of petition, meets or exceeds the maximum limit of REPLs under the population cap: Yes, Sitka currently has 8 REPLs, which exceeds the population limit of 6 (*note: many municipalities including Sitka have historic, “grandfathered” licenses that are allowed to remain active even though they exceed the population cap*).
5. Granting of additional REPLs will be in the public interest: Additional licenses would enhance dining options for both residents and visitors while supporting the growth and diversification of Sitka’s small business community.
6. When factoring in permanent resident population, those outside the municipality that rely on the municipality for goods and services, visitor population, and non-resident worker population, the additional REPLs requested does not exceed one license for each 1,500 population: 4 additional REPLs (total of 12) would result in a ratio of one license for 55,139 population (see more information below).

In determining the number of additional REPLs to request, staff looked at recent petitions from other municipalities between 2023-2025 including Valdez, Wasilla, Soldotna, Haines, Homer, and Juneau. Excluding Juneau, the average license to population ratio was 1 per 13,346. Applying that same ratio to Sitka (again, factoring in visitors and non-local workers) would result in approximately 50 REPLs which seems far outsized for Sitka needs. Juneau’s petition resulted in a license to population ratio of 1 to 52,774; Juneau’s target ratio is more analogous to Sitka given the like proportions of residents to visitors in the two communities.

In addition the resolution, staff will draft a letter to the ABC Board with data sources for population estimates, other supporting information/analysis for the petition, and a synopsis of public comment opportunities offered.

Recommendation

Take public comment, provide staff with any feedback or additional information that should be considered/added to the draft resolution or petition materials, and make a recommendation to the Assembly.

Potential Motion: **“I move to support the City and Borough of Sitka’s petition to the Alaska State Alcoholic Beverage Control Board to issue up to four additional restaurant or eating place licenses.”**

CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-xx

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA
PETITIONING THE ALASKA STATE ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL BOARD TO
ISSUE UP TO FOUR ADDITIONAL RESTAURANT OR EATING PLACE LICENSES**

WHEREAS, the City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) is incorporated as a home rule municipality and is eligible to seek additional Restaurant or Eating Place Licenses (REPL) from the Alaska State Beverage Control Board through the process outlined in Alaska Statute (“AS”) 04.11.405; and

WHEREAS, Sitka serves as a hub of regional commerce in Southeast Alaska, due to its strategic location, established fishing and seafood industry, role as a service center, and its expanding healthcare and tourism sectors; and

WHEREAS, approximately 8,063 people live in Sitka year-round, Sitka employs over 3,600 non-local workers and has over 650,000 yearly visitors; those workers and visitors rely on CBS for goods and services meeting the requirements outlined in AS 04.11.405(b)(1)(A); and

WHEREAS, the Sitka Police Department has 7 sworn peace officers and numerous other staff members to provide local law enforcement services including police patrol and criminal investigation, meeting the conditions outlined in AS 04.11.405(b)(1)(B); and

WHEREAS, the CBS Planning Commission and the Planning and Community Development Department are tasked with wide-ranging planning and land use authority including, but not limited to, zoning regulation and oversight, management of CBS lands, and updates to the CBS Comprehensive Plan, meeting the conditions outlined in AS 04.11.405(b)(1)(C); and

WHEREAS, the CBS currently exceeds the maximum number of REPL licenses allowed under AS 04.11.040(a) with 8 active licenses, meeting the conditions outlined in AS 04.11.405(b)(1)(D) and (c)(3)(B); and

WHEREAS, when considering the cumulative number of year-rounds residents, non-local workers, and annual visitors, the total resulting population is well above the additional population that would be required for the 4 additional licenses requested to maintain the 1 to 1,500 ratio mandated under Title 4, meeting the conditions outlined in AS 04.11.405(c)(4); and

WHEREAS, expanding the availability of beer and wine sales to additional local restaurants would enhance dining options for both residents and visitors, while also supporting the growth and diversification of Sitka’s small business community and related employment opportunities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka hereby petitions the Alaska State Alcoholic Beverage Control Board to issue up to 4 additional restaurant or eating place licenses within the City and Borough of Sitka under Alaska Statute 04.11.405.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska
this 12th day of August, 2025.

Steven Eisenbeisz, Mayor

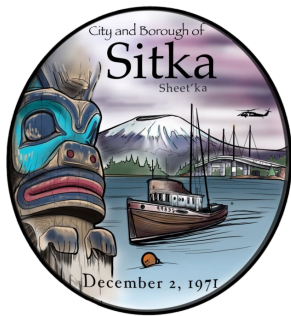
ATTEST:

Sara Peterson, MMC
Municipal Clerk

1st and final reading: 08/12/2025

Sponsors: Christianson / Ystad

DRAFT



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Chair Plank and Tourism Commission Members

From: Amy Ainslie, Planning & Community Development Director *AAA*

Date: July 3, 2025

Subject: Zoning Change Regulating Development of New Cruise Ship Docks

Recommendation #23 from the Tourism Task Force (TTF) Recommendations states:

Currently, the zoning code does not differentiate between types or sizes of commercial use docks. Commercial use docks are allowed by-right in the general commercial zones, the waterfront district, and the industrial district.

The task force recommends creating a separate use in the zoning code that would distinguish large docks that could berth cruise ships, and make that use conditional in all zones that currently allow commercial use docks. The definition could be based on the size of the dock, the size of vessel it can berth, and/or the number of passengers that could disembark from a vessel berthed at the dock. As a reference point, SGC 18.15.014 states that the Assembly may authorize an advisory vote that would authorize the sale or lease of municipal property for use of a dock or transfer facility that could be used by cruise ships exceeding 300 feet in length.

The Assembly's Action Plan for TTF Recommendations identified that the Planning Commission should work on the zoning code change related to this recommendation. Over the last several months, staff and the Planning Commission have been working on outlining what this code change would entail.

Key Provisions

1. Proposed Definitions:

"Cruise ship" means a passenger vessel with overnight accommodations for commercial passengers and designed for the purpose of providing pleasure and/or leisure travel, generally stopping at multiple ports on a fixed itinerary. Cruise ships do not include Alaska Marine Highway System ferries.

“Cruise ship dock” means a fixed or floating structure, including moorings, that serves cruise ships that have the maximum capacity to accommodate 250 or more overnight passengers, exclusive of the ship’s crew, by either berthing the cruise ship, or berthing passenger lightering vessels that transport passengers to and from the cruise ship otherwise anchored or berthed at another location.

2. Zoning Districts

In the zoning code, uses are either “permitted” (i.e. allowed by right), “conditional” (meaning that a conditional use permit is required), or prohibited.

Currently, Commercial Use Docks are:

Allowed by Right: CBD, C-1, C-2, WD, I

Conditional: GI, LI, R, OS

Prohibited: P, SF/SFLD, R-1 & Related, R-2 & Related, C

Cruise Ship Docks would be:

Allowed by Right: None

Conditional: P, CBD, C-1, C-2, WD, I, GI, LI, R, OS

Prohibited: SF/SFLD, R-1 & Related, R-2 & Related, C

3. Level of Approval

Currently, conditional use permits are approved by the Planning Commission and only require one review/meeting. The Planning Commission has agreed that cruise ship dock conditional use permits should have:

- An optional (but highly encouraged) conceptual review
- Review & recommendation by the Planning Commission
- Assembly approval

4. Submission Requirements

In addition to the standard submission requirements for conditional use permits (legal description of properties involved, statement of objectives, detailed description and site plan of land use, building types and locations, density, parking and traffic, open space, utility plans, grading and drainage, signage, etc.), applications for cruise ship docks must also include:

- Site plans for proposal must include in-water and upland development
- Site plans for initial and final development (i.e. binding site plan for staged development)
- Traffic study prepared by licensed professional (including traffic counts, sufficiency of proposed parking, necessary traffic control/calming devices, potential hazards/disruptions/inefficiencies and proposed mitigations)
- Transportation plan (i.e. bussing/mass transit of passengers if necessary/proposed)
- Operating plan including:

- Min, average, & max passenger capacities (daily/weekly/ seasonally)
 - Provisions for Port Security
 - Emergency service access to site and vessels
- Draft schedule for development & staging, including anticipated permits needed from other agencies
- Plans & provisions for waste disposal
- Estimates of supplies & resources purchased and used in Sitka

5. Criteria for Evaluating Impacts

Planning Commission decisions on conditional use permits are to be on the basis of code-prescribed criteria. Many of the general conditional use permit criteria will be applied to cruise ship dock applications, however the Planning Commission felt that some modifications and additions were needed in these cases.

Unchanged Criteria:

- Odors to be generated by the use and their impacts.
- Hours of operation.
- Location along a major or collector street.
- Potential for users or clients access the site through residential areas or substandard street creating a cut through traffic scenario.
- Effects on vehicular and pedestrian safety.
- Ability of the police, fire, and EMS personnel to respond to emergency calls on the site.
- Logic of the internal traffic layout.
- Effects of signage on nearby uses.
- Presence of existing or proposed buffers on the site or immediately adjacent the site.
- Relationship if the proposed conditional use is in a specific location to the goals, policies, and objectives of the comprehensive plan.
- Other criteria that surface through public comments, planning commission, or assembly review.

Modified Criteria (added language underlined):

- Amount of vehicular traffic to be generated and impacts of traffic on nearby land uses, the city and borough road system with particular attention to proposed transit route(s) and major and/or collector streets, the central business district, and tour and attraction sites frequented by visitors outside of the central business district such as historic sites, recreational areas, museums, and other cultural, artistic, scientific, educational, or animal care facilities.
- Amount of noise to be generated by the use and its impacts on surrounding land uses, the city and borough road system with particular attention to proposed transit route(s) and major and/or collector streets, the central business district, and tour and attraction sites frequented by visitors outside of the central business district such as historic sites,

recreational areas, museums, and other cultural, artistic, scientific, educational, or animal care facilities.

Additional Criteria:

- Capacity of the community to accommodate additional cruise passenger visitation including impacts on:
 - Resident access to critical sites and services including public facilities, educational facilities, health care facilities, transportation services and facilities, offices, banks, recreation areas, subsistence areas and resources, and public and private utilities;
 - Public services and infrastructure including but not limited to public safety, transportation, utilities, solid waste disposal, public restrooms, community buildings, recreational sites, and visitor information.
 - Ability of merchants, hospitality providers, commercial transportation providers, and operators of tours and attractions to accommodate additional visitation; and
 - Other factors that surface through public comments, planning commission, or assembly review.

Next Steps

Staff will be working to format these changes into an ordinance which will be reviewed by the Planning Commission with a recommendation to the Assembly, which will then consider the ordinance (with a minimum of two readings required for passage).

Recommendation

Provide any input or feedback on the proposed zoning change for cruise ship docks.

Potential motion, **“I move to recommend approval of the zoning text amendment regulating the development of new cruise ship docks.”**