



Parks and Recreation Committee Minutes Tuesday, October 21, 2025, 6:00 p.m. Sitka High School Library, 1000 Lake Street

Members: Chair – Ben Hughey, Vice-Chair Candace Rutledge, James Poulson, Brandon Marx, Steve Black, Katherine Prussian, Manoj Battar
Assembly Liaison: Kevin Mosher

SPECIAL MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hughey called the meeting to order at approximately 6:07 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Ben Hughey, Brandon Marx (via zoom), Katherin Prussian, Steve Black, Candace Rutledge, Manoj Battar

Absent: James Poulson (excused)

Assembly Liaison: Kevin Mosher

Staff Present: Deputy Municipal Clerk Holley Bayne, Parks and Recreation Coordinator Kevin Knox, Recreation Activities Specialist Elle Campbell, and Planning and Community Development Director Amy Ainslie

Others: None.

III. AGENDA CHANGES

None.

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD *(For items OFF the agenda - Not to Exceed 3 Minutes)*

Jay Erie spoke on ADA access to Cross Trail.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS – 2026 COMMERCIAL RECREATIONAL LAND USE PLAN

A. Local Trails & Water Access

Public Comment: Kealoha Harmon commented.

The members discussed the item and supported removing guide limits.

B. Thimbleberry Trail

Public Comment: John Murray commented on annual review options. Kealoha Harmon spoke in support of including percentages for small operators.

The members discussed this area has higher allocation for commercial use, yet lower impact. A short discussion was had about fractional allocations.

C. Baranof Warm Springs

Public Comment: Jay Erie desired adding the grotto and etiquette signs. John Murray commented on overuse of the area. Mike Trotter commented on maximum group size. Luke Bastian spoke of Goddard permit levels, consideration of long-range charters, and guide usage at Baranof Warm Springs.

The members and staff discussed land ownership, accommodation of long-range charters, and clarification of the DNR/CBS land use agreement.

D. Goddard Hot Springs

Public Comment: Brandon Finn commented on small operations usage. John Murray spoke of Goddard history, allowing commercial use, and needed maintenance improvements. Jay Erie recommended a third tub. Luke Bastian commented on Goddard history allowing commercial use.

The members discussed preventing overcrowding and managing both local and commercial use. They agreed on limiting group sizes (with some favoring four instead of six) and adding rules on etiquette. A special condition was proposed for operators to guide clients to use only one tub at a time. There was some support for exceptions for non-motorized vessels under 25 feet, but more public input was desired. The group also debated options for commercial use, and agreed to be prepared to present the assembly with several options on October 28.

E. Fees

Public Comment: Luke Bastian suggested applying fees towards site maintenance. Bethany Lowrance recommended allocating fees to site infrastructure.

During group discussion, Ainslie clarified the changes approved by the committee thus far. She relayed that the Sitka Tribe of Alaska requested the new fee structure to be delayed one year.

F. Other Plan Sections & Provisions

Public Comment: Andrea Thomas questioned prior year's limits. Kealoha Harmon questioned when the permit applications would be available.

Ainslie clarified there was no prior year data to compare, however future versions of the plan will include a summary tracking changes over time. The timing of permit application availability depends on Assembly adoption of the plan, with the goal of permits being available mid-late November. Staff will issue permits, not the Parks and Recreation Committee. It was suggested to add fractional group sizes and criteria for evaluating applicants, including public comments and compliance history.

G. Plan Recommendation

Public Comment: John Murray spoke in support of the plan accommodating all users. Bethany Lowrance thanked the committee.

Ainslie summarized the change log.

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

Jay Erie questioned payment for dock usage at Baranof Warm Springs and commented on the poor grid condition.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no objection, Chair Hughey called the meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Attest:
Holley Bayne, Deputy Municipal Clerk