

Discussion / Direction
on No Name Mountain and Granite Creek
Master Plan.



City and Borough of Sitka

100 Lincoln Street • Sitka, Alaska 99835

Coast Guard City, USA

Memorandum

To: Mayor Paxton and Assembly Members

Through: John Leach, Municipal Administrator

From: Amy Ainslie, Director, Planning and Community Development /s
Scott Brylinsky, Special Projects Manager /s

Subject: **No Name Mountain/Granite Creek Master Plan Project, Status Report #4 w/Planning Commission recommendation**

Date: April 3, 2020

Background

The rapid spread of, and response to, COVID-19 is changing how the community does business on all levels. As the situation has developed, staff has considered how to proceed with this project.

Status

Based on current public health protocols, we have cancelled the public meetings previously scheduled for April 7th and 8th, with no plans to reschedule the meetings. We have been in discussions with the consultant team on options for continuing work on the project in light of current public health conditions.

At the April 2 Planning Commission special meeting, the Commission in their role as the steering committee for the project, considered some options for moving forward, which ranged from terminating the project now to continuing under an extended timeframe.

The discussion resulted in the following motion:

Motion by Commissioner Hughey, seconded by Commissioner Weaver, passed 4-0.

M-Hughey/S-Weaver moved to recommend moving forward with the No Name Mountain/Granite Creek Master Plan, using an interactive website in lieu of public meetings and keeping all other contract terms including the completion target of mid-June. This would be re-evaluated in mid-May to gauge the level of public involvement; the project timeline may be extended if the Commission is unsatisfied with the result. Motion passed 4-0 by roll call vote.

Intent of this option would be to realize the full benefit of the project with final study recommendations based on public input. The draft plan would still be presented to the Planning Commission and Assembly in late May as scheduled. However, the interactive webpage would allow members of the community to be engaged and provide input at their convenience over a two-week period, instead of attending a public meeting at a fixed date and location. Notification of the webpage would be posted on

City's website, local paper, radio, social media, etc. Public participation via the webpage could actually turn out to be greater than with the public meeting. Cons of this option are the community focus is now on public health concerns, and the public may not want to think about or be engaged in the planning study.

Public Outreach to Date

Diverse public input is central to a successful plan. We recognize that some of our most knowledgeable and experienced citizens may not be inclined to attend public meetings, or be technologically comfortable enough to participate via web-based platforms. Both the consultants and staff have made direct outreach to over 50 community members, representing individuals and businesses involved in fields including, but not limited to, earthwork and construction, real estate, and tribal government.

Note on contract terms

The contract provides the city with the option to terminate the contract at the owner's convenience with 10-days written notice. Consultant must provide all work products to date under this provision.

The contract may be amended by mutual consent of the parties. It is the judgment of staff that the modification to the planning process described in this memo constitutes a change to the tactics of the project, but not the overall goals, deliverables, or timeline of the contract, and therefore does not require a formal contract amendment.

Recommendation and Path Forward

Staff supports the Planning Commission's recommendation. We believe it provides a path forward on the project as well as providing value for the community. While recognizing that community life, business, and government may temporarily be altered by the COVID-19 outbreak, Sitka still has a future, and some sort of normalcy will eventually return. The need for a land-use plan for this large parcel remains.

As of now no direction has been given to change course on this project. Staff is moving forward with the plan unless direction is given to reconsider.

Action requested

We recognize that the Assembly's focus at this time is on high-priority public health concerns and other matters requiring immediate action. Staff does not wish to distract from these high priority items unless requested.

No formal action is requested unless the Assembly or any Assembly member indicates a desire for an action item on this project.