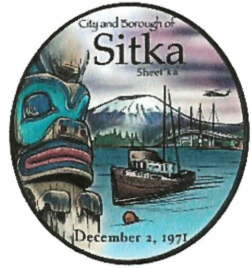


**APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT TO BOARDS, COMMITTEES, AND COMMISSIONS**



**Board/Commission/Committee:** Tourism Task Force

**Seat Applying For (select only ONE):**

- Sitka Tribe of Alaska Representative
- Ports and Harbors Commission Representative
- Sustainability Commission Representative
- Downtown Business Corridor
- Business in General
- Tours and Attractions
- Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal
- Community At-Large

**Name:** Larry Edwards **Phone Number:** [REDACTED]

**Address:** [REDACTED]

**Email Address:** [REDACTED]

**Length of Residence in Sitka:** 44 years **Registered to vote in Sitka?**  Yes  No

**Employer:** Self (but mainly retired)

**Organizations you belong to or participate in:**

Transition Sitka (board member); Global Cruise Action Network (regular zoom meeting attendee); Stay Grounded (an international network of 200 organizations, advisory board member); Solutionary Rail (Technical Team member); Alaska Rainforest Defenders (board president).

**Explain your main reason for applying:**

Overtourism having never been sufficiently evaluated & addressed, the combination of this task force and Strategic Plan Goal 1.4 (re tourism: "develop[] policies that prioritize quality of life") is exciting. My background and skills can contribute to a productive task force process and balanced recommendations. +

**What experience or credentials will you bring to the board, commission, or committee membership?**

Continuously for 50 years I've served on boards (often in leadership) and collaboratively on committees (often multi-organizational). As an engineer I approach complex problems (like this one) analytically. Past work included evaluating laws & regs for progress potentials, and thinking outside the box toward success. +

**Please disclose any potential conflicts of interest that may arise from your appointment. These may include but are not limited to:**

- A substantial financial interest of \$1000 annually that could be influenced by your appointment.
- An immediate family member employed within the scope of this appointment.

**To be considered, your application must be complete AND include a letter of interest, or a resume.**

**Date:** 19 April 2023 **Signature:** Larry T. Edwards

Digitally signed by Larry T. Edwards  
DN: cn=Larry T. Edwards, o=US, email=larryedwards@ci.sitka.ak.us  
Reason: I am the author of this document  
Location: Sitka, Alaska  
Date: 2023.04.19 09:16:05 -0800

Return your completed application and letter of interest or resume to the Municipal Clerk's Office by noon on the Wednesday prior to an advertised Assembly meeting.

PLEASE NOTE: All information submitted is public and will be published online. Appointments are typically made during Assembly meeting open sessions. However, Assembly members may vote to discuss applicant(s) in closed executive session. In this case, do you wish to be present when your application is discussed?  Yes  No

**RETURN TO: Jess Earnshaw, Deputy Clerk/Records Specialist**  
**Municipal Clerk's Office, 100 Lincoln Street, Floor 3 ~ Fax: 907-747-7403 ~ clerk@cityofsitka.org**

## **Larry Edwards — Letter of Interest for appointment to the Tourism Task Force**

Here first is a more thorough introduction to myself than you may have had. Then I present some thoughts on the complexities of Sitka's tourism situation and my perceptions.

Quality of life and a solid economy have always been of key importance to me in my four decades in Sitka. I moved here in 1976, having – sight unseen – accepted an engineering position at the pulp mill. 18 months later I quit and began challenging the mill's noncompliance with its air and waste discharge permits. Ultimately 14 years later, in 1992, I sued over the mill's water pollution and was lead plaintiff when it became a class action. A key demand was that the mill go to a closed-loop water treatment process, using technology already demonstrated at a similar mill. The mill closed in 1993 as a result of growing global competition in its niche market. In 1994 I settled the lawsuit shortly before trial, a good move for Sitka at that juncture. A key provision required Alaska Pulp to fund with \$2 million the Sitka Alaska Permanent Charitable Trust, which we jointly founded. The Trust continues to be an economic asset for Sitka, nearly 30 years later.

My pressuring of the mill from the late 1970s onward, over forest practices as well as its pollution, came with physical and financial risks. I proceeded anyway because of the importance of protecting health, subsistence and other aspects of quality of life here. I did so in the belief that even if the mill were to close (as it often threatened to do if it didn't get its way), Sitka's future around the economic blind corner ahead would not be the bleak one the mill wanted everyone to believe.

So, after leaving the mill and becoming a controversial character, I took on whatever work I could find in order to persist in a small, divided town – seasonal work at Fish & Game and in the cold storages, for example. I also started a sea kayaking business (Baidarka Boats) in the late '70s (well before sea kayaking became 'a thing') which I owned for 23 years. I eventually had 1 to 3 employees, depending on season. Business was primarily mail order (based on expedition expertise), some local sales, and about 10% rentals and day tours. I intentionally limited the rental and tours portion as a courtesy, to not impinge on the outdoor quality of life of my fellow Sitkans.

In 1998 I was active in the campaign which defeated (70%/30%) the ballot measure for CBS to lease tidelands for a downtown cruise ship dock — another quality of life issue. From 2003 into 2017 I worked full time for Greenpeace, based in Sitka as a forest campaigner on Tongass issues and also working on some international climate issues.

So that's me, and that's my stake in the quality of life here and in our economy.

**My present thoughts on the complexities of Sitka tourism.** Both aspects of Sitka tourism (cruise-based tourism and independent) are in need of long range planning, and cruise tourism is of immediate concern because of uncontrolled explosive growth, and another major cruise line possibly coming soon. Establishment of both the Task Force and the related goals in the CBS Strategic Plan is welcome, and has come none too soon.

Overcrowding downtown is becoming more frequent, because of cruise growth. Some see dispersion of cruise passengers as a solution, but this may spread the problem across additional places rather than solve it. Concerning road traffic, with Sawmill construction done and coming left turn lane, some feel the difficulty may be fixed; but Sitka will have 150,000 more cruise passengers than last year, most of whom will be bussed in — so it's still an open question in my mind. Whether a secondary downtown bus staging area is a solution or would be practical is uncertain and bound to be controversial.

Lack of housing, especially affordable housing, is a persistent problem to which both forms of tourism contribute, with 38% of summer season tourism-related jobs being held by non-

residents last year. Independent travel contributes to the proliferation of day rentals, over which there continues to be controversy over whether availability and affordability of housing for residents is significantly affected.

The public has never been surveyed on what it fundamentally wants regarding tourist numbers, with surveys to date having had questions only for identifying the problems. Similarly, information is lacking on what numbers of cruise or independent travelers are at least 'sufficient' for dependent businesses, and for which kinds of those businesses. And a big question mark is how much correlation is there between sales tax revenue and the numbers of cruise and (separately) independent travelers.

I have begun to look into the sales tax question, through one public records request so far. I have a list of questions about the kinds of data I hope to find in further research, in order to determine as closely as possible over the years how much 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter sales tax revenue came from tourism, and to what degree that has corresponded to respective quarterly cruise ship capacity. Also, I wonder to what extent we can suss out, how much more valuable independent travelers are than cruise ones on average, and which sizes or types of ships or which cruise line brands of cruise ships produce the most tax revenue (and business revenue) per passenger? The Task Force may be able get somewhere on such questions, and I'm prepared to roll up my sleeves. In some cases there will have to be best guesses (if even possible) rather than precise answers, but we should try to learn what we possibly can.

I have also been looking for ways that Sitka may be able to exercise its agency, as a Home Rule Charter government, to gain some control over the impact of cruise ship tourism. Control can perhaps be gained by negotiating with cruise lines, or it may be gained through regulation. Some towns are making headway in those regards, but each town's circumstance is different, including ours; we all can learn from each other, and we can brainstorm new approaches and assess their negotiable or legal feasibilities.

Concerning the means of control of cruise impacts, there are several possible approaches: number of ships per day; number of passengers per day downtown; number of passengers per year; number of trips per day by >50 passenger capacity busses that use city controlled streets or property; number of days per week without cruise ships; requesting that there be no ships of over a certain capacity; and so forth. Some of these are more feasible or more effective than others, and some might be compatibly used with another particular one.

I have been putting cruise schedules of past years into my own spreadsheets, for close analysis to better understand the nature of cruise impacts and the industry's growth.

I have told you much here that you already know, so my appreciation for your patience; but now you have an understanding of what is on my mind, what I can bring to the Task Force's process, and that my work is exploratory and my opinions not yet fully formed.

On the Task Force I will strive for consensus. But this is a thorny issue and consensus may be difficult for a diverse body to achieve. The main thing, in either event, is for the process and the participants to be respectful and for the work to be productive. If consensus is not reached, I think competing views should be reflected in a range of recommendations that are made to the Assembly, and in that manner be brought to the public for fuller discussion and debate.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Edward". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a stylized "E".