

## Ariadne Will

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**From:** jeff budd <jbudd3500@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 16, 2026 11:22 AM  
**To:** Planning Department  
**Subject:** No new Cruise Ship Docks in Sitka

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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Dear Amy, My two bits are: this is just another way that McGraw is seeking to bring more people to town. He got shut down about putting his operation near Xoots Elementary. Again another ploy to bring more people to town.

Let's hold the line, or better yet reduce the number to around 450,000 visitor preseason, regardless of the size of the ship.

Please forward to the Planning Commission members. Thank you for your time. Cheers, Jeff Budd

Larry Edwards  
Box 6484  
Sitka, Ak  
907-752-7557  
17 Feb 2026

To: Planning Commission members

Subj: Comments on the draft ordinance to regulate construction and operation of cruise ship docks

Dear Commissioners;

My comments on the draft ordinance are predicated on a belief that the volume of cruise tourism in Sitka is already beyond Sitka's reasonable capacity to absorb. The comments are also informed by a lifetime of experience that regulation which provides unnecessary flexibility can easily lead to an unfortunate outcome that the regulation ostensibly was supposed to avoid.

My views of the circumstances for this ordinance are:

1. There is more than enough existing dockage for cruise ships and lighters, since Sitka needs less cruise visitation – not more.
2. With a moratorium in place (through a prohibition on new or expanded docks), if a rearrangement of existing dockage capacity becomes necessary (potentially including new construction to replace old) the Assembly can, under Sitka's existing governance system, allow such change within the community's capacity, as a conditional use.

There was a speculative concern at a Tourism Commission meeting that the ordinance should not prohibit new docks if used to accommodate lightering of passengers from the Cruise Terminal (to avoid busing). First, there seems to be ample capacity for this at existing downtown lightering docks. Otherwise, it is an example of where the Assembly could exempt a reasonable project from the moratorium, through a conditional use permit.

3. Given the difficulty of writing a definition of "cruise ship" that does not have unintended consequences, it is necessary to exempt truly minor operations where they are appropriate under existing zoning. The draft ordinance, however, allows significant new operations to occur either by right or by conditional permit (in either the under 100 or the 100-500 categories).

A truly minor operation, in my view, is one that is on the same scale as bear guiding boats or something on the scale of pleasure boats currently using private docks. Since this class of docks will be allowed "by right," and since Sitka has a lot of residences mixed into commercial and industrial zones, the scale of allowed docks (regarding infrastructure and operation) should be very small.

So excluding docks for vessels with 12 or fewer overnight passengers seems to be a reasonable cut off. It is unlikely that all such new docks combined would add significantly to present cruise overtourism.

4. The tier in the draft for "minor" (100-500 daily passenger) cruise ship docks is speculative. There are no proposals one or more docks like that. Passenger flows of this scale are already well accommodated with existing facilities, so with cruise tourism already being over Sitka's reasonable capacity, there is no need for allowing new facilities like this to be built. The category of minor docks should be eliminated since it serve to *invite* such docks as a conditional use. It is unreasonable to provide this invitation.

5. Accordingly, I propose that the ordinance include only two tiers of docks for passengers on overnight cruises. One is docks with truly small flows (12 passengers daily, or whatever number is decided) by right as above (unless constrained by existing zone code), and the other is everything else – which would be a prohibited use (essentially a moratorium).

6. The Planning Director has made a point that the ordinance should contain conditional use provisions, so that there is guidance for the Assembly if it makes an exception to a prohibited use. This could be included by requiring a conditional use permit for any expansion of an existing cruise dock. The ordinance would make such docks allowed non-conforming uses, and this would say that expansion of capacity is conditional.

7. The draft does not yet cover docks beyond the road system. I recommend that the prohibition apply throughout the City and Borough. Continuing to allow dock construction beyond the road system either by right or conditionally is dangerous, because globally the cruise industry is expanding very rapidly and is building more and more remote “destinations.” Last month at a public meeting, Juneau’s Tourism Director said cruise lines are interested in creating “remote destinations” in Southeast. Let’s not invite that by leaving the door open in this ordinance, anywhere in the borough. Even the moratorium still troublingly leaves the door open a crack.

**In conclusion**, I recommend that the ordinance excuse docks that are deminimis (12 or fewer overnight passengers daily, or whatever very small number the commission prefers), and that new docks larger than that be a prohibited use within the road system and throughout the rest of the borough.

### ***Process of the Commissions and the Assembly***

The Planning Commission is one of only two commissions established in the Charter, and has powers granted by the charter, including:

“Report[ing] its recommendations and advice to the Assembly ... on such matters pertaining to planning and zoning as the commission may desire ...”, and

“Formulate and develop planning proposals for submission to the Assembly ... upon its own motion.”

In the packet for this meeting, the Process 1 and Process 2 flow charts for review of conceptual development proposals has the Tourism Commission superseding the Planning Commission’s powers. After the Planning Commission reaches its recommendations and findings, the flow charts have the Tourism Commission reporting directly to the Assembly after perhaps modifying Planning Commission’s recommendations and findings, or making different ones.

This is contrary to important independent characteristics of the Planning Commission in the Charter. Moreover the superseding power would be given to a commission with intentionally built-in conflicts of interest – the Tourism Commission.

I believe the process should be that the Planning Commission formulates and reports to the Assembly its own recommendations and findings, after considering advice from the Tourism Commission and the public, with the Tourism Commission involved in only that way.

Sincerely,



Larry Edwards

## Ariadne Will

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**From:** Carolyn Nichols <carenichols@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 16, 2026 6:33 PM  
**To:** Planning Department  
**Subject:** Cruise ship docks

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We definitely do not need any more cruise ship docks! For any type of vessel, no matter how many passengers! The town has enough strife within it in the summer with the present amount of tourists around! I am totally against any more docks!

Carolyn Nichols, Sitka, Alaska

## Ariadne Will

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**From:** Suzanne Shea <sitkasms@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 16, 2026 8:41 AM  
**To:** Planning Department; judson.rusk@cityofsitka.or  
**Subject:** Draft ordinance

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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In response to the draft ordinance on building cruise ship docks being considered:

I do not support cruise ship docks, major or minor, being allowed in Sitka or the Borough of Sitka. The town has previously voted against cruise ship docks, twice!

Stop flooding our town, sucking up our resources, and degrading our quality of life with cruise ship tourism.

Suzanne Shea  
Sitka Alaska

## Ariadne Will

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**From:** Bruce White <bawgofish@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 16, 2026 8:27 AM  
**To:** Planning Department; Judson Rusk  
**Cc:** assembly  
**Subject:** No more cruise ship docks/tourists - please!

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Good Morning,

Please, no more cruise ship docks/tourists! Sitka is currently awash in tourists in record numbers. Enough is enough! There is very little left of the quality of life that we enjoyed just 10 years ago. There appears to be a correlation that as the number of cruise ship tourists increases, the number of residents decreases. Unless your goal is to speed up out-migration - please put a stop to the tourism tsunami!

Sincerely,  
Bruce White  
Sitka