



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, Scott Saline (Alternate)

July 10, 2025

6:00 P.M.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Jeremy Plank called the 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; Alana Peterson (arrived 6:15 p.m.); Jeremy Plank; Scott Saline (Assembly)

Absent: Rachel Roy (excused)

Staff: Amy Ainslie, P&CD Director

Public: Richard Wein, Larry Edwards, Thor Christianson (Assembly)

Secretary Bryant-Martin confirmed quorum was present.

III. CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA

No agenda changes were made.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

M-Bryant-Martin/S-Dempster moved to approve the May 8, 2025 and June 12, 2025 meeting minutes. Motion passed 6-0 by voice vote.

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 licenses in Sitka.

Commission members reviewed Ainslie's 7/3/25 memo regarding a petition and draft CBS resolution for additional restaurant and eating place licenses (REPLs) in the City and Borough of Sitka. Ainslie stated REPLs are only available for "bona fide restaurants" to sell brewed beverages and wine on licensed premises (hard liquor not permitted). Ainslie also stated municipalities in Alaska cannot have more than 1 REPL per 1,500 residents without a petition. She presented the State's criteria for additional REPL petitions as well as an overview of other Alaskan municipalities' approved petitions in recent years which included Juneau, Homer, Haines, Valdez, Wasilla, and Soldotna which were based on ratios of licenses to permanent residents, visitors, and non-residents. Ainslie recommended that Commissioners take public comment and provide suggestions for the Assembly to consider on the draft resolution/petition. Commissioners discussed population estimates and felt CBS could possibly qualify for 8 to 12 additional licenses. Richard Wein spoke in favor of the petition and suggested the city apply for ten or more to accommodate growing demand from visitors. Scott Saline stated that 4 licenses wasn't enough for Sitka. Assembly co-sponsor for the resolution, Thor Christianson, spoke in favor of the petition but cautioned against requesting too many licenses such that the petition would not be approved. Commission

members discussed the goals of promoting economic growth and supporting small businesses by applying for as many REPLs as possible. Peterson spoke to the financial difficulties of running a restaurant in Sitka, especially in the winter months, without an REPL. There was discussion on what the right number to request would be. Lowrance stated she was aware of 4-5 businesses that would be highly interested in applying for additional licenses if available. Calvin stated four additional licenses was too many.

M-Bryant-Martin/S-Lowrance moved to support the City and Borough of Sitka's petition to the Alaska State Alcoholic Control Board to issue up to six additional restaurant or eating place licenses. Motion passed 6-1 by roll call vote with Calvin opposed.

B. Review a zoning change regulating the development of new cruise docks

Ainslie presented current efforts and progress on a zoning change to regulate the development of new cruise ship docks based on recommendation #23 from the Tourism Task Force that the Planning Commission was working on. Key provisions included proposed definitions of "cruise ship" and "cruise ship dock", which zones had been identified as allowing cruise ship docks as a conditional use versus being a prohibited use, proposed permit submission requirements, and criteria for evaluating impacts of proposed cruise ship docks as a part of the permitting process. Commissioners asked about the extent of zoning for the whole borough, with Ainslie noting that the majority of lands in the borough (outside of the road system and islands in Sitka Sound) are not zoned. Commissioners asked Ainslie how existing cruise ship docks would be affected by the zoning change, and Ainslie responded by stating that existing docks would be allowed to continue under legal non-conforming use permits. Peterson stated that she would like to see more consideration of environmental impacts in permitting potential cruise ship dock developments, recognizing Ainslie's comments that many environmental standards were monitored and enforced at State and Federal levels. Ainslie stated that compliance with State and Federal laws was a common condition of approval for conditional use permits which helps to promote environmental protections.

Plank opened the floor for public comment. Larry Edwards and Richard Wein advocated that in the zoning change, cruise ship docks should be prohibited in all zones as it served as a stronger form of protection against additional cruise ship docks that the community may not wish to see developed as opposed to allowing the use conditionally. Edwards also stated that cruise ship docks should also be prohibited in all un-zoned areas of the borough.

Commissioners reviewed the list of proposed zones in which cruise ship docks would be a conditional use, and discussed changing it to a prohibited use in all or more zones. Commissioners discussed the merits (stronger regulatory position to deny proposals) and drawbacks (deterrence of economic development/investment in Sitka) of making the use prohibited in all zones. The Commission decided it would be best to have the Planning Commission consider these comments, re-evaluate zoning districts in which cruise ship docks would be conditional versus prohibited, and review again once this had taken place. No action was taken.

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

Scott Saline shared information he had learned at a recent meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers regarding Fort Babcock, and his concern about the lack of public process regarding permitting of commercial users to take visitors there and Shoal's Point. Larry Edwards stated that he would like to see recordings of Commission meetings made more publicly accessible by posting them on the city website. Richard Wein echoed Larry Edwards' comments and added that he would also like meeting transcripts be made available. Wein also commented on liquor licenses noting that SEARHC held a license and support

for six or more additional licenses, and reiterated his previous statements on the zoning change for cruise ship docks and making them a prohibited use in all zones.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

M-Bryant-Martin/S-Lowrance moved to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Minutes By: Carol Bryant-Martin, Secretary