



Tuesday, November 19, 2019

Dear Sitka Assembly Members:

Re: Seatrade Cruise Global - 2020

I understand that the Assembly will be discussing the funding for sending a representative from the City and Borough of Sitka to the Seatrade Cruise Global expo in Florida. Halibut Point Marine Services constructed its deep water dock in 2011 and attended Seatrade Cruise Global for the first time in the spring of 2012 with the purpose of increasing cruise ship traffic to Sitka. Pete Equiro's attended representing the City the first year and a representative from the City has visited the south Florida with the purpose of increasing cruise traffic every year since then. Sitka had approximately 100,000 cruise ship passengers visit in the summer of 2012. Sitka is forecasted to receive over 240,000 passengers during the summer of 2021. Some of this growth is a result of the Alaska Cruise industry as a whole growing, however I believe that the increased marketing efforts to promote Sitka as a cruise destination over the past 8 years have a lot to do with the increased traffic Sitka is seeing.

I believe that having a representative from the City and Borough does two things. First, I believe it shows the cruise line executives that Sitka is supportive of the cruise industry and that we are eager for their business. I feel that this hasn't always been the case and certain aspects of the cruise industry still remember Sitka voted down cruise ship docks which came across as "Sitka does not want cruise ships" I feel that this image has changed over the past 8 years, in large part to the increased efforts of private organization and the City and Borough promoting Sitka as a cruise ship destination.

The second thing that it does is it provides experience and helps educate the City and Borough on the cruise industry and how competitive the market is for the ships amongst the ports in Alaska and worldwide. As we continue down the path of lean financial times the cruise industry is becoming an even more important economic driver in Sitka's economy. The more knowledgeable the City government has on this industry, it is likely that better decisions will be made regarding this industry and the local economy.

In years past the Assembly has sent Assembly members, and or the Mayor. I would recommend that the Assembly send the new Administrator John Leach. I feel that this would be a great opportunity for Mr. Leach to gain knowledge regarding the cruise industry along with meeting representatives from the cruise lines and individuals from within the cruise industry in Alaska. The cruise industry is a significant sector in Sitka's economy and having an administrator that is well versed in the details of the industry is important to the health of our local economy.

Respectfully,
Chris McGraw
General Manager
Halibut Point Marine Services