



City and Borough of Sitka

PROVIDING FOR TODAY...PREPARING FOR TOMORROW

Coast Guard City, USA

MEMORANDUM

To: Chair Spivey and Planning Commission Members

From: Amy Ainslie, Planning Director *AA*

Date: March 12, 2021

Subject: **Tourism Master Plan – Assembly Request**

At their March 9th meeting, the Assembly moved and unanimously agreed “...***to request the Planning Commission develop a Tourism Master Plan to address the 2022 tourist season and plan going forward.***” Staff would like to provide some context for this request and outline next steps.

Recent forecasts for the 2022 cruise ship season predict that approximately 400,000 cruise ship visitors will come to Sitka over the summer season. This is substantially larger than even Sitka’s largest cruise ship season, which per Chamber of Commerce records was 289,753 passengers in 2008. The Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal (sometimes colloquially referred to as the “McGraw dock”) is working to improve its facilities such that it could host two Quantum-class ships, which each have capacities in excess of 4,000 passengers. With two of these ships in, Sitka’s day-time population could nearly double on a given summer day. The Assembly would like to have a master plan that helps address some of the tactical/logistical decisions that will need to be made on passenger dispersal, transportation, and traffic concerns.

Staff’s recommendation to the Assembly, and to the Planning Commission as well, is to start the process off by holding a joint session between the two bodies to discuss the vision, purpose, and scope of the plan, the timeline for delivery (the suggestion as of now is December 31, 2021), and the process for how the plan will be worked on including public engagement and communications between the two bodies. If this is agreeable to the Planning Commission, staff will coordinate the joint session to take place on **Tuesday, April 13th at 5pm** at Centennial Hall.

As this will be a time-consuming effort, the Commission should discuss how to balance other initiatives such as the Comprehensive Plan review and action item list, as well as the use-table review. While staff does not recommend abandoning either effort, we should discuss timelines and pacing.