



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Minutes - Draft

Planning Commission

Wednesday, September 15, 2021

6:30 PM

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Present: Chris Spivey (Chair), Darrell Windsor (Arrived 7:30pm), Stacy Mudry, Wendy Alderson, Katie Riley, Thor Christianson (Assembly Liaison)
Absent: None
Staff: Amy Ainslie, Ben Mejia
Public: Jim Michener, Phyllis Hackett, Kaleb Astle, Marsha Howard, Chris McGraw, Michael Harmon (Public Works Director), Tamy Stevenson, Amy Rowe, Sabrina Jenkins, Shauna Thornton, Sabrina Jenkins, Michele Martin, Wendy Lindscoog, Gerry Hope, Lynne Brandon, Ariadne Will (Sitka Sentinel), Katherine Rose (KCAW)

Chair Spivey called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

II. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA

III. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

A [PM 21-21](#) Approve the August 18, 2021 meeting minutes.

M-Mudry/S-Riley moved to approve the August 18, 2021 meeting minutes.

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

V. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ainslie informed the Commission that there was one regular business item ahead of the tourism discussion. Ainslie reported an update on the Sawmill Creek Road project, stating that Alaska Department of Transportation would schedule a presentation with the Planning Commission around February to discuss project details. Ainslie explained that the next meeting was scheduled for October 6th, 2021 and would discuss traffic and staging at Harrigan Centennial Hall.

VI. REPORTS

VII. THE EVENING BUSINESS

B [LM 21-01](#) Public hearing and consideration of a tidelands lease request for municipal tidelands immediately adjacent to 1406 Sawmill Creek Road

in the WD - Waterfront district. The lots are also known as All of ATS 1327 Tract A and a portion of ATS 1327 Tract B. The request is filed by Thomas Williamson. The owners of record are Sharon and Lisa Williamson.

Ainslie described the request to lease the tidelands adjacent to 1406 Sawmill Creek Road. The request was made by the upland owners who intend to sell the property. The applicants have identified a challenge for buyers to secure financing without having the tidelands secured as part of the sale of the uplands. Ainslie noted that the Planning Commission would need to determine if the lease was the best use of this municipal property and that the Assembly would decide whether there is a clear upland preference, therefore making a competitive bid inappropriate. Ainslie noted that the deed restriction from the transfer of the tidelands from state to municipal land prevented the sale.

Ainslie described the property as 15,634 square feet of primarily filled with some submerged tidelands adjacent to Waterfront district property currently used for storage. Ainslie noted the area was shallow with limited use by watercraft. Ainslie stated the impact of the lease as minimal. Staff recommended approval.

Alderson asked if the tidelands were currently leased. Ainslie clarified that the areas requested were not.

The applicant, Tom Williamson, was present.

The Commission opened the floor for public comment. Jim Michener voiced support for the request, and recognized a shortage of available waterfront properties.

The Commission voiced their support of the proposal.

M-Alderson/S-Riley moved to recommend approval of the lease request for Municipal tidelands located seaward of 1406 Sawmill Creek Road. The properties were also known as all of Tract A, ATS 1327 and a portion of Tract B, ATS 1327. The request was filed by Thomas Williamson. The owners of record were Sharon and Lisa Williamson. Motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.

C [MISC 21-09](#)

Discussion/Direction on Short-Term Tourism Plan

Ainslie introduced the discussion to focus on downtown traffic and congestion mitigation for 2022, identify the problems the need to be addressed by the Summer of 2022, and discuss what solutions the Commission and community were most interested to see implemented. Ainslie noted that the solutions for 2022 were not intended to replace an in-depth traffic study or replace needed long-term solutions but focus on what can be implemented within a year. Ainslie explained that discussion of traffic and staging around Harrigan Centennial Hall would take place October 6th.

Problems identified included increased risk of using residential roads such as Peterson Avenue and Lake Street, impacts of traffic on emergency services, impacts of traffic on bicycle movement, and a lack of downtown parking. The participants discussed possible solutions including Lincoln Street closures or traffic flow changes, modifications to traffic light signaling, and using a person to direct traffic at the light. Michael Harmon, Public Works Director for the City and Borough of Sitka, noted that the current sidewalks were inadequate for the current pedestrian capacity, and were vastly insufficient to handle the projected pedestrian use which might result in pedestrian use of the road or avoidance of downtown. Chair Spivey requested that

future discussion of Lincoln Street closure include discussion of the RIDE.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no objections, Chair Spivey adjourned the meeting at 9:01pm.