



# CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

## Minutes - Final

### Planning Commission

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Wednesday, November 16, 2022

7:00 PM

Harrigan Centennial Hall

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#### I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Present: Chris Spivey (Chair), Darrell Windsor, Stacy Mudry, Katie Riley (excused), Wendy Alderson (excused), Thor Christianson (excused)  
Staff: Amy Ainslie, Kim Davis  
Public: Laurie Booyse, Harvey Brandt, James Poulson, Chris McGraw, Bruce Conine

Chair Spivey called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

#### II. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA

#### III. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

##### A [PM 22-20](#)

M-Mudry/S-Windsor moved to approve the November 2, 2022 meeting minutes.  
Motion passed 3-0 by voice vote.

#### IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

#### V. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ainslie reported the Planning Department had a candidate for the Planning Manager position and will report to the commission if an offer was accepted. This position would be primarily focused on zoning and subdivision code administration and would be very involved with the Commission. This would also provide the department with more capacity to work on other projects and initiatives arising from the Comprehensive Plan and recently adopted Strategic Plan.

#### VI. REPORTS

#### VII. THE EVENING BUSINESS

##### B [MISC 22-16](#)

Ainslie introduced the discussion on the 2023 Tourism Operations Plan. Primary topic areas included Lincoln Street closures, temporary restroom locations, safety improvements, programs and amenities, and planning for future years. Ainslie invited the public to give feedback and offer suggestions which would be compiled into a tourism plan to be presented to the Assembly for adoption.

On Lincoln Street closures, Laurie Booyse of Visit Sitka was in favor of keeping Lincoln Street closed for a better visitor and local experience. She said there were local musicians who performed during closures, and businesses had more traffic and sales. People were also safer, but she didn't think there were enough places for people to sit and rest. Windsor asked if the change in the threshold from 3,000 to 5,000 to close Lincoln Street that occurred mid-season worked better. Ainslie stated it did, as 3,000 seemed sparse but 5,000 seemed right-sized. On closure times, the Commission did not have a strong recommendation and Spivey stated the Assembly could decide if the street needed to be closed or open sooner. Ainslie clarified for the 2022 season, no parking started at 9:00am and that it took the Police Department about an hour to clear the street of vehicles to close the street by the time designated. The Public Works department would also need a certain amount of time to reopen the street as well. There was discussion on whether an alternate closure schedule should be considered such as closing on set days of the week, or extended hours on certain days added in the evenings for locals to utilize. Ultimately, Commissioners voiced consensus for keeping the closure consistent with 2022 operations, and that they would want to hear feedback from downtown business first before extending any closure days.

The public was invited to indicate on a map where they would like to see temporary restrooms placed for 2023. Locations indicated were the 2022 locations (in the parking lane on Lincoln Street adjacent to the Barracks Street intersection and at the top of Maksoutoff Street), Totem Square, in the Harbor Drive/Castle Hill area (behind the Harry Race building), the parking lots of banks adjacent to Harbor Drive (Wells Fargo and First National Bank of Alaska), behind Harrigan Centennial Hall, and at College Drive/Crescent Harbor Playground.

Safety improvements discussed included a traffic conductor at the Lincoln Street and Lake Street stoplight and/or a reconfiguration of the intersection to create a left turn lane from Lake Street to Lincoln Street (eastbound). Pedestrian crossing improvements along Harbor Drive were also strongly favored. Staff explained this would take coordination with the State of Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT). Other suggestions included not having wayfinding signage at crosswalks, since people stop to read the signs and motorists don't know if people are crossing the street or not. It was suggested to reevaluate the content on the wayfinding signs and perhaps add QR codes to wayfinding signs for tourists to download maps. James Poulson suggested not closing Maksoutoff Street for temporary restroom placement so traffic had another route to Lincoln Street instead of going all the way to the traffic light. There was discussion of e-bike and bike safety. While there was not a clear direction on the right approach to handle safety issues such as sidewalk use, helmet usage, and side-by-side riding along Halibut Point Road, some options such as outreach/education with locals and rental companies and more enforcement of existing, related ordinances were favored. Other safety recommendations included working with DOT to create a better bike lane for Halibut Point Road. Harvey Brandt suggested future planning should consider the creation of a trail on the ocean side all the way out Halibut Point Road that would be better for pedestrians and bikers. He said Sitka Trail Works was currently working on a master plan for future trails and would be the right organization to help achieve a goal as lofty as this.

A few of the programs ran by CBS during the 2022 season included Police Department issued food carts permits for Lincoln Street, the Planning Department assisted with the Walk, Bike, Win program and CBS also had six organizations participated in the Bathroom Grant program. Suggestions included a beautification incentive program and adding benches to Lincoln Street. It was suggested the Historical Preservation

Commission could create some design guidelines for main street beautification. Staff was asked for clarification on the code regarding sidewalk obstructions and stated the code prohibited obstructions within 8 feet of the curb. It was also suggested that picnic tables be made available during closure days, and to have better lighting added to Lincoln Street.

Planning ideas for future years included study and design for drop-off and dispersion of buses and passengers to help manage traffic. There were also several comments from the community survey about bus electrification. Staff recommended the Assembly tasking the newly formed Sustainability Commission to study transport electrification. Chris McGraw provided comments regarding congestion of traffic and pedestrians surrounding Harrigan Centennial Hall. He suggested spreading out the activities which occur around Harrigan Centennial Hall by finding an alternate shuttle drop-off location, and have any vessels which are tendering to bring passengers to the O'Connell Bridge Tendering Dock. As for the electrification of buses, a 45 ft. motor coach was in the \$1 to \$1.5 million dollar range to purchase, and there were 17 buses in the shuttle fleet. He believes there are more opportunities for governments to get grants for the electrification of transport vehicles than private organizations. Bruce Conine suggested an electric rail system that would shuttle passengers from out Halibut Point Road into town. Laurie Booyse suggested reviewing our public transportation to increase service in terms of routes, stops, weekend service, and service to the airport. The service offered currently wasn't very reliable and did not operate on the weekends. There was also no service the airport and this was a community problem that needed to be reviewed. Finally, Windsor suggested the Assembly form a dedicated group/body for tourism planning and management such as a commission; Alderson echoed this idea.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**Seeing no objections, Chair Spivey adjourned the meeting at 8:33PM.**