

Excerpt from Stakeholder meeting notes, 11/27/06

**Floyd Tomkins: Transient Boats in the Harbor
[See Handout]**

Floyd: The point that I am hoping to address tonight is how many people come to the harbor, and how many private visitors there are? It turns out that it is really difficult to answer those questions. I went about it several different ways, none of which are inclusive. The first thing I did was go to the harbor department, but they don't count people, they only count boats. They do registry as boats come in, but there is no way of knowing which ones are old boats that are being reregistered. Private boats do not have to report how many people are on board. We would mostly be guessing at how many people are on the average boat that comes through. There is no way to get at it without an accounting system being put into place by the harbor department. The only data available was that there were 160 boats coming to the harbors and registering May through September 5. The harbor department mentioned large yachts, and they do get personal contact with those. They call ahead and reserve moorage, so they are easier to get data on. There were 22 private yachts registered this year. The captain and crew are not allowed to get off, so we can't assume that the captain and crew are contributing to economic factors in Sitka. Some other feedback suggested that cruisers like being able to tie up downtown, and not fight their way through town. Last years survey by McDowell had an addendum by the Sitka Convention Visitors Bureau, which the Harbor Department administered to private cruises. There was an average of 3.3 people per party, and about 208 private cruises acknowledged coming through Sitka. What I gathered from a survey done by the college was that there are about two percent of visitors that acknowledged being on private yachts. My assumption is there were nearly 300 private cruise passengers over a 5-day period in Sitka. All of this is educated guessing. There were no figures, so this is a start.

Q: So you had an estimation of 208 and another estimation for 292 for 5 days?

Floyd: I don't know how many questionnaires they handed out. It is not a very firm number and is kind of up in the air.

Q: What was the question we were answering?

Floyd: I think it related to separate stats on independent versus cruise ship visitors. We have a fairly silent pool of visitors who's number and characters are difficult to define. I was trying to find out how many yacht visitors and private cruise visitors there were.

Separate Stats on Independent vs. Cruise ship Visitors (Planning O)

Q: Was this one of our original questions?

Floyd: I think it came up as we were brainstorming who the visitors were to Sitka. There are several different sectors. It occurred to me when Mike raised the question of how many people come through the harbors, that maybe some directed investigation could get some numbers for that.

Q: So, if we really wanted to know we would have to have some kind of harbor survey completed?

Floyd: If the harbor department were to record visitors, that would give us a lot of information. It wouldn't take too much effort to record how many people are aboard each boat. I don't know how you could account for the fisherman, maybe see if you could find out how many deliveries were made, and assume the other numbers. The number is higher than I thought it was going to be. The Union College Sample really

reflects the number of yacht people in that pool of visitors, and if it was a fair sample, that percentage holds up.

SH: I don't have the information, but did anyone see in the Anchorage Newspaper the article about the economic study that was done on tourism and revenues in Sitka. I think the University of Alaska, Institute for Social Economical and Environment al Research, did it?

SH: There was an article in the Sentinel with those numbers. It did make it into the paper here.

Stef: So, is there enough information available there to close this question? This is a very broad question, and there are a lot of different categories.

SH: When you ask people to fill in a survey, there is some statistical information that you can actually reference if you want to look at numbers that you generated and look at continuing outward from there.

Q: Did you get any impression that the harbor was interested in collecting that kind of data for themselves?

Floyd: No, and they seem to be too busy keeping up with everything, especially in the summer, which seems to be normal state of affairs. More data would be really useful, but I don't know if they could be persuaded to assemble it.

Stef: As far as putting a red dot on this issue, I am open to suggestions. It sounds like we have a lot of information on this issue.

Floyd: I think that the fishermen sector is probably an even larger number. Maybe we could count fishing tickets, and break it down that way.

Stef: It might be hard to figure out all of the costs, including what kind of shopping they do, groceries, fuel, fishing gear, etc.

Q: Doesn't it seem with the information that Floyd has and the other explanations and information we've had, isn't it time to bring together those bits of information to get a comprehensive picture? It still adds up to more information than we had to start with.

Stef: I think we have to decide where we want to put our energy. There is not a lot of energy being spent on planning right now. It might be good to do planning, instead of trying to collect little bits of information. I am thinking that we only have a few meetings in December to redefine strategies. By doing more data collection, this is telling us where the gaps are in the information. We are still learning where the dearth of information is, and developing strategies to try and get it. If we could get a year behind us of collecting information, we could have some sort of system set up.

Q: Do we have enough information to make some summaries to address that question? I think that there is enough information to go on and make some recommendations.

Andrew Thoms read the following information from the Anchorage Newspaper, regarding the tourism industry in Sitka and Juneau:

Charter Fishing in Sitka brought in 21 million in annual revenue. There were 223,000 visitors for the summer of 2006, worth 79 million dollars. Twenty six percent of revenue is from the charter fishing, and yachts that come through the community. It also said that Lodges accounted for 44 percent, Sport fish was seven percent, adventure accounted for two percent, whale watching accounted for eight percent, ten percent for city tours, and so on. Some of the information is cruise ship visitors and what they did while they were here. One of the interesting things is what they said about Sitka from a statewide perspective: Sitka is maintaining community appeal character, and capital

investment compatible with the rate of growth. This study is published, and part of it should be in the database on the web site.

Q: Did this come from a university study?

Andrew: Yes, this is a presentation that they gave of that study, by going around to different places. We are going to try to get them to come in March to do a summary of that study. At that time we could ask them about their methodology for the study. I can forward this presentation to the steering committee to put on the website. It also talks about other places in Southeast Alaska, and some of the problems they are having.

SH: If you take the most optimistic numbers from Floyd's report, and double it and make it 600 cruisers over 5 days, and multiply that by 20, that is only 12,000 private cruisers over the summer contributing money to the economy. The numbers don't match up in the article that the Anchorage paper wrote. I think they are too high.

SH: If you figure what they are paying for moorage fees, fuel, food, artwork, they are spending quite a bit. From this report we know that they represent a significant amount of income.

SH: Yes, but what does that work out to be per visitor? It would be about \$10,000 a person, which seems really high.

SH: One other cost factor could be that they use a private jet to come in on, and all of the cost associated with that. My understanding is that there are a lot of corporate jets that fly in.

SH: They are obviously a really high value, low impact market; it seems like they would be a good market to pursue.

SH: It would also be interesting to know if they are counting the outfitting and guiding business as the yacht business. With the newer yachts, a lot of that is paid for by corporate, as part of a package for people that work for them. It is not individual income; it is corporate income that you see.

SH: Does that money really come into Sitka then?

SH: Yes it is being spent in Sitka; it is just corporate dollars instead of individuals.

SH: It is not the case for everybody, but there is a percentage out there that it includes.

Stef: It would behoove us to look at the data a little closer and find out how they collected it.

SH: I say for our purposes to give this question a red dot.

Cleo: It is one segment of independent traveler. Has this question been explored enough?

SH: Maybe we could red dot it with the understanding that this issue will be pursued further when we get other information.

Cleo: The importance of one of the strategies that needs to come out of this work is the idea of keeping the value of the tourism industry in front of Sitka, as a community, so they are aware of the financial contributions that the tourism industry makes to the town. So having the details of the tourism plan: how you want to grow the business, how you want to change it, etc.; that information should be synthesized.

It was decided that there was enough information given to close this issue, with the possibility of pursuing it further when more information is available. The question was given a red dot.