

**Sitka Long-Range Tourism Plan Collaborative Process**  
**Stakeholder meeting**  
**March 14, 2006; 6:30 pm**  
**Maksoutoff Room – Centennial Hall**

**In attendance:**

Facilitation Team: Matthew Turner and Kayla Boettcher;  
Steering Committee: Cleo Brylinsky, Stef Steffen, Hugh Bevan, John;  
Public: Jay Stelzenmueller;  
Stakeholders: Allen, Rob; Bryner, Chris; Budd, Jeff; Corson, Ken; Culp, Vern; DeLong, John;  
Dudgeon, Greg; Dunlap, John; Eddy, Janet; Edwards, Perry; Farvour, Jeff  
Filler, Angela; Fondell, Chris; Fritz, Kathy; Grussendorf, Karen; Harris, Scott; Johnstone,  
Judy; Litman, Mike; Lorrigan, Sandy; Malone, Dave; Marx, Bill; McConnell, Mim; McKenzie,  
Liz; McNamee, Tina; Meizner, Karen; Nelson, Richard; Nurco, Michael; O'Connell, Tory;  
Putz, Michelle; Rear, Ken; Reeder, Fred; Rehkoff, Darryl ; Ryan, Tim; Saline, Scott;  
Speerstra, Linda; Thoms, Andrew; Trierschild, Chuck; Webber, Debra; Webber, Matt;  
White, Dirk

**Introductions:**

Matthew Turner and Kayla Boettcher – facilitation team, contracted through city  
commission  
Cleo Brylinsky, Stef Steffen, Hugh Bevan, John Litten – Steering Committee members

**Agenda:**

Overview of collaborative process  
Expectations of SH  
Orientation of consensus and collaboration  
Questionnaire, Break  
Exercises for redundancy and scarcity – who in the community do we reflect  
How does the visitor industry impact you?  
Establishing future meeting schedule  
Debrief

**Cleo gives the history of how the Long Range Planning Commission started this process:**

Last November, the LRPC asked the Assembly for permission to shepherd a collaborative process to bring forth a long-range tourism plan for Sitka. The issue of tourism keeps coming up; it seems to be a divisive topic. The Assembly gave permission, and allowed the LRPC to proceed in the way they felt would be best. The LRPC decided to follow a process established by David Chrislip, who has led collaborative process work in Sitka before. Four members of the LRPC agreed to serve on the Steering Committee for this process (Cleo, Hugh, Julia, and Stef), and they opted to add Brian McNitt and John Litten from the community to round out the committee. They decided to hire a local community member in the role of facilitator for the Stakeholder meetings (Matthew). They also have David Chrislip on contract as a process expert, and Chris Beck on contract as an information expert. The Steering Committee gathered a larger group of community members – the “Conveners” – to

identify the perspectives and experiences (P&E) we need to have involved in this process to ensure true collaboration. This was all groundwork to get us to this meeting tonight – the Steering Committee is hopeful that the Stakeholders here tonight reflect all those P&E.

**Matthew proceeds to give the group an orientation to the role of the Stakeholders, and the expected path of the process:**

The LRPC came up with this mission statement to give the Assembly so they would buy into it:

*To create a plan that provides for sustainable tourism business development and maintain Sitka's quality of life, recognizing the characteristics that make Sitka attractive to both residents and visitors.*

When this mission statement was introduced at the public meeting, several questions and concerns were voiced about if this was the most appropriate way to word it, particularly about its reference to business development. Matthew told the group that there will be a place in the process to review the mission statement, giving the Stakeholders the opportunity to make it something they are all comfortable with.

The fundamental concept of collaborative process: *If you bring the appropriate people together in constructive ways with good information they will create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of the community.*

Often the goal is to win people over to your own point of view, but we're more interested in reaching consensus and finding a true vision for tourism in Sitka. The neat thing is, if we truly have brought a representative group together, if we truly engage in a public dialogue, then whatever we come up with *will reflect* the wills and desires of this community. Getting the assembly and other power groups to buy into it will happen because the people are behind it.

Who are these appropriate people? As Cleo said, the Steering Committee brainstormed some folks that represented many different sectors (the "conveners") and asked them what are the needed perspectives and experiences that we must have reflected to come up with viable plan? They came up with about 50 P&E. Then based on those P&E, the Steering Committee and Conveners brainstormed people that reflect all of those P&E. If you were invited, it's because we identified you in a role that needed to be filled. Others are here because they heard about it and want to be involved. Everyone is welcome. We're going to be building from this point forward – it may be difficult for someone to come in late and know what's been happening. It is critical now that we create a consistent group of Stakeholders.

This will be a consensus process – there are no votes. We're not going to have everyone stand up and say what they think, we're going to brainstorm and work in small groups, and take it apart and put it together until everyone says yes and agrees. For example, we'll what does "quality of life" mean to you? Then we'll work that out until everyone agrees. There won't be any coalition-building. Bringing in more people with your own opinions won't make a difference – every individual has veto power.

Stakeholders will also engage in ongoing community dialogue – not just in the meetings, but within the community in between the meetings. It will be important to bring those community perspectives into the meetings, also take what you have gleaned from the

meetings into the community and keep them informed too. Everyone in the community needs to know that if they can't be Stakeholders that they can find someone like them who shares their concerns and know that their concerns will be voiced in the next meeting.

Who is a Stakeholder?

It's everybody – the effects of tourism in Sitka ripple out even farther than Sitka to some of our neighboring communities. But its tough to bring 9000 people together; so we have to have a group that:

- reflects the needed P&E,
- reflects the community,
- is credible to most folks in Sitka (inc. assembly and LRPC),
- is committed to the process (it's going to be interesting, entertaining, not always fun – divergent paths that we'll have to work through);
- will come to as many meetings as possible;
- is invested in the process and won't block it – that doesn't mean you can't strongly disagree, but we have to be careful that we're allowing a process to happen, that if we trust the process, the outcome will truly reflect the community's wishes.

Process Map:

Phase 1 – Orientation

Q: Who are the Stakeholders and what will they do?

estimated time: 1 week (1 meeting) – benchmark is to complete today

Meeting goals: to understand the process that the SH group will undertake; to identify the core working group of SH.

Phase 2 – defining the issues, building a shared understanding

Q: What are the aspects of Sitka’s visitor industry that concern us the most?

Estimated time: 5 weeks

This is the phase where SH become experts on the data, issues, perspectives, reports, etc.

Phase 3 – defining the vision

Q: What do we want Sitka’s visitor industry to look like in 2, 5, and 10 years?

Estimated time: 1 week

Based on the information gathered and digested, and with the help of all Stakeholders, this will be the time to discuss where we want to go. This will also be the time to revisit the mission statement.

Public meeting: May 4 – this will be an opportunity to make sure this group is in check with the public, make sure the public agrees with where we’re at, and be able to say that the questions the public would raise have been brought up in the meetings.

Presentation to the Assembly: May 9 – an official update on the process so far.

Then – Summer. May be some work in the summer, but less intensive.

Phase 4 – Defining Strategy

Q: What do we recommend doing to reach this vision in the next 2, 5, and 10 years?

Estimated time: 12 weeks; mid-Aug thru Oct.

Matthew had referred to this part of the process as defining the visions “through the lens of the visitor industry.” A SH commented that this seems like a limited vision, it’s not our town, and she’s not sure a vision seen through that lens would actually be our town.

Matthew responded that this is just a sketch of a map – we’re trying to get at “what are we going to do about the visitor industry.” The SH can absolutely tweak this wording along the way – but the point is first to reach a shared understanding, then decide where we want to go?

October 31 is the goal to end this phase of the process: there will be another public meeting at the end of October, and a presentation to the Assembly in November.

Matthew reiterates that except for today’s meeting goals and agenda (Phase 1), the steps on the Process Map are a sketch, but they provide an idea of the phases we need to go through.

Matthew asks for questions, concerns, and statements of deep thought from the group:

Q: veto power and consensus – what does that mean?

A: In difficult situations, such as the topic of tourism/visitors in Sitka, tends to divide some groups – the idea in consensus is not that I have to agree with your perspective. The rules are not that you have to come to my point of view, but that we approach the discussion with a sense of inquiry. Each Stakeholder’s job is to understand more and more about what the others feel and know, and through that dialogue we’ll come to a shared understanding. It’s not about what side each person is on, but what we can say about these topics that we agree on. There can be different degrees of consensus: we can decide that either everyone has to feel good about it, that I don’t like it but I’m not going to stop it, or no, this doesn’t work. We’ll decide what these rules are as a group. It’ll be a lot of work in the beginning, but when we get to the strategy piece, it’ll go more quickly because we’ve already come to a shared understanding.

Q: Why is revisiting the mission statement put in Phase 3 since there were so many questions/concerns about it?

A: It’ll be easier to talk about what we need to do after we’ve agreed on where we are. The idea is to bring this group together and get us clickin, start to know people by name, how they feel, etc. Easier to deal with things like vision and mission statement once we agree on things like this.

Q: In Phase 2, what is the role of subjectivity v. objectivity – are we defining facts or opinions?

A: Both. We will separate things into facts and opinions. We will do our best to examine our own opinions and see how many of them we can be objective about. There will be some that are subjective. Try to objectify as much as possible. Not with the goal of changing minds, but greater understanding.

### **Questionnaire and Break**

The SH are asked to fill out a questionnaire, which includes contact information, 3 questions to be used as a brief biography, a photo release request, and the list of P&E. They are requested to place checkmarks next to all P&E that apply to them – this will help us better understand how well-balanced the SH group is.

During the break all the chairs are cleared for the next activity.

After the break, participants are asked to line up on both sides of the room, facing each other. This next section is intended to get an idea of how well we did in representing the community P&E. Matthew reads the list of P&E, asks people to step forward when he reads the role/affiliation/perspectives that apply to them. He also encourages them to look around, see who shares their perspectives – if there’s a lot, maybe not all need to be here. Also notice where there are only 1-2 – we need to know where those scarcities are we can do more recruiting.

P&E that were scarcely represented in this activity: Alaska Native, Asian/PI, Youth (high school), Students (college), Entry-level workers, Law enforcement, Builders/contractors/real estate, Restaurant owners/managers, Suppliers, Charter fishing, AML Sampson, and local transportation.

The group agrees that there needs to be some more recruitment to fill these gaps. Matthew tells the group that they all have a collective responsibility to make sure the appropriate people come together in this group – the SH have to feel good about this process and need to advocate for it, otherwise it won't work.

Q: Weren't there people that were supposed to be in this process that aren't here today? A: Not everyone could attend this meeting. We recognize that we can't expect everyone to be available for every meeting. But we also need to set some parameters for the % of attendance – but if we go below those parameters, only a portion of the group knows what happened, and we'll spend the next meeting bringing those people up to speed.

About 120 people were invited to tonight's meeting – there are 40 present.

The Steering Committee could go back to our list of people to invite/recruit and check with the people that didn't come from the lighter categories.

Matthew also asks the group to reflect on if they saw a lot of the same people stepping forward when they did – if there is abundance in some categories. Are some people here in a cluster? He suggests that perhaps they get together with your cluster and decide which of you will commit to it.

Participants are invited to bring a chair and form a circle. Matthew leads a go-round, where everyone has 30 seconds to answer the question:

How does the visitor industry in Sitka impact you?

### **Scheduling:**

Final bit of business for tonight is to set the schedule for future meetings. Matthew anticipates that it will take at least 30 hours of meeting between now and May 4 (phases 1-3). He also proposes that meetings be at least 3 hours long, allowing for enough time to open a topic, dive in, and close it. He proposes weekly weeknight meetings of 3 hours, and 2-3 Saturdays for 4 hours. He also notes that we've done some research on space availability, and at Centennial Hall, the best night would be Mondays. The group agrees to meet every Monday night until May 1, from 5:30-8:30. A light meal will be provided at these meetings. Matthew promises to start promptly at 5:30, and it is suggested that people eat while we meet to make the most of our time.

The next meeting will be Monday, March 20, 5:30-8:30 at Centennial Hall.