

Sitka Long-Range Tourism Plan Collaborative Process
Steering Committee Meeting
4 April 2006; 12:00
Centennial Hall Maksoutoff Room

Meeting Summary: The Steering Committee is planning the agenda for the next Stakeholder meeting, and needs to determine what to do next with the lists of requested information (i.e. studies, data, expert insights, etc.) that have been developed, and how to proceed with providing this information to the Stakeholders.

In attendance:

Steering Committee members: Julia Smith, Brian McNitt, Hugh Bevan, Cleo Brylinsky

Stakeholders: Tim Ryan, Mim McConnell, Wendy Alderson, Judy Ozment

Facilitators: Matthew Turner and Kayla Boettcher

Julia refers to David Chrislip's workbook, noting that we are in the Information Needs section of the process. We've been through the brainstorming process and developed lists of needed information – now we need to combine and group some of these info ideas. Since they were organized by topic, there is a fair amount of overlap in the information lists. Matthew and Kayla said they would figure out where the overlap is. Kayla said they're updating the documents according to last night's additions/revisions. They're going to try to determine overlap, but need input from the Stakeholders on some to understand what they all mean.

A Stakeholder asks if by "info" we mean studies that are already done and we know how to retrieve, or info that we generate. It's a combination of individual experts, panel of experts, and surveys/outside assessments by consultants. There's a limit on resources though – only \$6000 and limited time to deal with all of this.

Next thing the Stakeholders need to do is develop criteria to determine which approach(es) to use.

One committee member suggests that the SH could work in groups – each group could take the criteria, look at their info needs, use criteria to determine which approach will work best. Some of the criteria have already been discussed, i.e. urgency, availability of the information, etc. SH should think about if there are other criteria needs that haven't been identified yet.

Other comments:

- Credibility is one – just for studies that already exist, to determine whether the SH trust the source or the report
- SH must agree on how to gather the information and how to select resources – key step to build confidence in the process.
- SH should have a conversation about the best sequence for tackling the information (the order we tackle the topics). We could really get scattered at this point without a plan – some SH last night felt unfocused and unfinished at the end of last night's meeting.

One SH said, "I had a hard time last night, it felt unproductive – several people in my group have been talking about this since 1970. There were lots of comments about studies that have been done in the past but not revisited."

Another SH commented that there is some distrust in the sources of the studies (i.e. McDowell), but do we take them off the list? With only \$6000, it's hard to figure out how we're going to get our priorities within that budget. If we keep rehashing stuff, people might get bored and feel unproductive. He said he's heard lots of negativism – no positive comments about this process – and he doubts whether the Assembly is going to do anything with all this work. Also, we as a group need to recommend to the Assembly that this process doesn't stop in October – we need to continue

- Brian commented that during the solid waste process, every meeting it would come up that they didn't trust that the Assembly would do anything with it – in the end, 30 people presented it, and a group stayed committed to seeing it through. We could aim to make this an institutional part of LRPC or somewhere else, so it continues.

Someone mentions that \$6000 is not going to get us what we need – maybe we should try to teleconference with outside experts and not pay for their travel to come here and present.

Another person comments: “What we need is some basic information and then an opportunity for a good discussion about what the community wants to do. A lot of the requested information may not be data-related...it would be easy to get burdened with what we think we need. We need to set some parameters around what we as a group can handle – commercial vs. charter; where the primary lightering facility is...these are issues we can't resolve – we could categorize those as issues we can't handle and put them to the side.”

Someone else adds that there are some issues we don't know how much control we have, i.e. cruise ship – we don't know what we can affect with them.

- Tim Ryan, who is a member of the Holland America board – from his knowledge, cruise visits to Sitka just have to fit in with their schedule; they recognize that there are some issues in some communities. He says we could make some recommendations to them about our concerns,

A committee member mentions that this makes Tim an expert here on the cruise industry, and is Fred as well – perhaps they would be willing to provide greater information to the rest of the group on some of these topics.

There was some concern voiced about the process – we can't spend the whole next meeting talking about information – some part of it has to move us further down the road. It's critical that people feel that the information we use is comfortable for the Stakeholders – some part of the meeting needs to be focused on how to determine where the info comes from and if it's credible.

A couple people said we need to have a discussion about issues that we can't resolve and take them off the table, such as the allocation issue, or whether or not there will be a dock at the mill. This isn't the proper forum to decide those things.

- To this, one of the Stakeholders questions what we *are* here to discuss. She also indicated she was surprised to hear that we wouldn't be handing the Assembly a completed plan. A Steering Committee member replies that the plan isn't part of the phase we're in that ends in October – we'll need to ask the Assembly for more money and time to finish the plan. Our work is to determine the pieces of that plan and have a smaller group of Stakeholders advise the consultant who writes it.

Back to the information list: After the matrix is developed that shows all the requested information and the categories they fit with, the Stakeholders should decide which ones rise to the top. There may be pieces of information that were requested more than once. They also need to go through the prioritizing process again with the items that were added last night.

The group talked about last night's process a bit, specifically the structure of working in groups of 10 or so.

- Working in the same group built rapport for some groups;
- But there were lots of distractions and personal digression; definitely could have used a facilitator in each group to keep focus.
- One person said he's learning a lot of insight from people by working in smaller groups, and he's coming up with new ideas to solve different problems, i.e. why not publish a cruise ship movement schedule so fishing fleet knows how the traffic moves.
 - To this, Hugh responds that he just got info on Juneau's best practices – that's exactly the type of thing they're doing – the cruise ships are responding to community requests.

The group turns the discussion back to the idea of pulling some of the topics off the table. Matthew asks the group if it would be taking the topic off the table, or if it's putting it aside with a recommendation – identifying it as a priority that needs to be resolved, and perhaps we could even get far enough with it to provide a strategy for resolving it. Someone replies that we wouldn't want it to take too much time or get into solutions too early. There are so many things on the list, we don't have enough time for them all; some of these contentious items are so evenly divided that it will take a lot of time to discuss.

A Steering Committee member suggests that we have a big group discussion about the things that shouldn't be part of this process with the Stakeholders, or perhaps in small groups for a short time. One concern about processing this in small groups is that every table could come up with the same items if everyone is looking at the whole list; perhaps we could limit the tables to suggesting 2 items to take off.

It is also suggested that Stakeholders go back to the list of concerns – not the list of information – to see if there are some the SH agree should be put aside. That will trickle down into the information needs that were identified to go with it.

- When they get set aside, they get put in the “parking lot.” The parking lot is at every meeting so the concerns are still there – that's a safe way to get it off the table without implying that we don't care about it – and we could revisit them in the solutions phase and see if we can resolve them then.

Two agenda items for Monday:

- Get through with the information stuff;
- Have a discussion about topics to take off the table (taken from the list of concerns)

It may also be good to provide an overall frame to help this along by clarifying what the Steering Committee wants to get done by October.

- Matthew draws a divergence/convergence diagram, pointing out that we don't plan to get all the way to convergence by October. He indicates how pulling things out of the conversation now isn't about disregarding those things, it's just in the interest of setting them aside to keep momentum on the other topics that we have more influence on.
 - Someone comments that there are some things that this group doesn't have any control over – perhaps they *should* go out of the process altogether. Someone quips that there should be a parking lot, and then there's the Serenity Prayer Zone.

Back to the issue of how to prioritize the information needs: a Steering Committee members, reading from Chrislip's book, says the Stakeholders must agree on how to gather information and select resources (are they credible?) so they have confidence in the process. The group is a bit stumped as to how to make this happen in a large group setting.

- Could run a consensus process based on what criteria they need to determine credibility.
- Chrislip said a perceived bias shouldn't prevent the information from being presented/discussed.
- Credibility comes from repetition, if we find the same data reported differently in different reports, then that's a concern.
- It's important to just look at the data from the reports, not the reporter's interpretation.

Are there some obvious information requests that we already have and can have available for them on Monday to start discussing?

- Visitor trends (McDowell)
- The extent to which the community can control the situation comes up a lot; i.e. legal and social mechanisms that communities can put in place to regulate tourism? Maybe we could line up Theresa Hillhouse and others as a panel to address this?
 - Hugh said he asked a state attorney and Theresa about how community can legally represent – they estimated that it would cost \$25,000 to figure that out.
 - Can we still do it as a panel? They could at least give the group an idea of how complex that question is...
- We could also put together a packet of stuff that they can start discussing on Monday or take home as homework.

Someone recommends that we add Juneau's best management practices list to the info list (www.tbmp.info). The practice in Juneau is that all companies receive a copy of the best practices and sign that they've agreed to them. Then there's a watchgroup on each other.

Matthew distributes the most current grid of information requests and explains that he tried to sort list by urgency; however, last night's additions didn't get ranked.

Another recommendation was made to have the four Native corporations in the area give a presentation about their views on these topics. Also, maybe the high school and SJ debate teams could take on some of these issues?