

**Sitka Long-Range Tourism Plan Collaborative Process**  
**Stakeholder Meeting #7**  
**April 17, 2006 5:30-8:30 p.m.**  
**Centennial Hall Exhibit Room**

**Summary:** Stakeholders are in the information gathering and presenting stage. Tonight they divided themselves into four groups that will seek information that will help the Stakeholders come to a common understanding of what is currently happening with tourism in Sitka today. Each of the four groups were given a list of topics that possibly could be answered from the same source (i.e. one group has questions for the city, another has questions for local businesses). Stakeholder groups will begin giving presentations on their findings at the next meeting, which will be Saturday, April 22.

**In attendance:**

*Steering Committee:* Hugh Bevan, Cleo Brylinsky, Brian McNitt, Julia Smith, Stef Steffen

*Stakeholders:* Wendy Alderson, Linda Behnken, Stacey Boles, Harvey Brandt, Lisa Brendle, Chris Bryner, Jeff Budd, David Clarke, Raine Clarke, Tom Clarke, Ken Corson, Vern Culp, John Delong, Greg Dudgeon, John Dunlap, Janet Eddy, Dorrie Farrell, Jeff Farvour, Peter Gorman, Scott Harris, Judy Johnstone, Mike Litman, Sandy Lorrigan, Dave Malone, Bill Marx, Mim McConnell, Liz McKenzie, Mary Jo McNally, Tina McNamee, Karen Meizner, Mary Beth Nelson, Michael Nurco, Judy Ozment, Ken Rear, Fred Reeder, Scott Saline, Linda Speerstra, Andrew Thoms, Floyd Tomkins

*Facilitators:* Matthew Turner and Kayla Boettcher

**Agenda:**

Steering Committee remarks

Information Update – sorted by source

Explore subcommittee categories and choose one to work on

Break

Balance checks on groups

Guidelines for presenting information to large group

Facilitators for small groups

Saturday's plans

“other” topics

Summertime meetings?

**Remarks from the Steering Committee (Julia Smith)**

Julia offers thank yous to lots of people who have been so generous with their time, especially people who helped with Conveners, those that attend Steering Committee meetings, participants in radio show, those who have taken leadership roles in small groups, all of you who have been faithful in participation and getting word out to community. She says she's heard conversations out in the community and knows the Stakeholders have been talking about it.

Julia continues: “Tourism has been in the spotlight this week – Assembly items, presentation to Chamber. Sometime we wish the world could stop while we're working on this. Made me think how different this public process is from other processes. We work from ground rules. We have an underlying message of respect for one another. We know we have different

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opinions and we have respect for that and for the process. All of that is in our ground rules. The SC hopes that our remaining time will be respectful and productive.

“So were are we now and why? At the last SC meeting, we contacted David Chrislip. We were frustrated with the last Stakeholder meeting a little bit – it was a little unsettled. We’ve made some progress but not the progress we were hoping for. David reminded us that we’re in the information gathering process – our task is to decide what info we need, gather that info and understand it. The reason is so we can come to a shared understanding of what tourism looks like in Sitka *today* – not the past, not tomorrow. This is our reference point for future things and the remainder of the process. By understanding what’s happening today, we gain new insights, and we’ll make better decisions when we arrive at the decision-making point. As we go through this process today, remember that we’re in the information-gathering phase.”

[Julia turns the floor back to Matthew.]

### **Information Update**

Matthew: What we have is a lot of needed information. At the last Steering Committee meeting we spent a lot of time trying to understand how we’ll get a grip on it. We currently have it organized by the 8 categories of concern. When you look at the needed information itself, it starts to fall into common themes – many categories had questions about sales tax, or questions about the cruise ship industry.

What we decided to do to start with was sort the information, not by area of concern, but where the likely source of information is. The following is a list of how we regrouped the information.

- Info from City
- Info from Cruise Industry
- Capacity questions
- Environmental questions
- Rural Status
- Info from businesses
- Specific information requests
- Opinions
- Other

Specific information and Opinions are being tackled by the Steering Committee. They are tracking down specific requests like the Gateway report and thinking about how to best gather the opinions of residents and visitors. Info from Cruise Industry and Capacity questions were put together into one group. Environmental questions and rural status were put together into another group. Info from businesses is the third, and Info from city the fourth.

What the Steering Committee and facilitators propose to do: form committees based on the above groups to start with – in those committees, find the answers to these questions. On Saturday, start presenting the information back to the whole Stakeholder group. The information will eventually be reassembled in the original 8 categories of concern to be discussed within the context of those concerns, but for now, this seemed like a more focused approach to quickly gather and present information.

- Matthew suggests that there are several ways the committee could choose to present their information – they could invite a content expert to present, or the committee as a whole could act as a panel and answer questions together, or divide it up amongst themselves.

The Stakeholders will form 4 committees, have some strategizing time tonight, and each of the committees will have a bit of time at the next Stakeholder meeting to present what they have found so far.

Stakeholder (SH) Q: If there's a source we think should be involved, we should suggest it now?

A: We divided into 4 groups like this just to get a start. There's also a big list of "other" topics that didn't easily fit into one of the above categories. When you see a request for information that your source could answer, take that information request within your group and get that source to weigh in on it.

Steering Committee comment: The committees are also going to have to pass judgment on what info is doable so that progress can be made – as you look at these lists, you'll discover that some info requests need to have a Ph.D thesis done before we have the answer.

SH Q: Are the questions still organized by urgency and accessibility?

A: Yes – more on that in a moment. We'll go into these groups to collect and manage the information – then there will be summer, and we'll reassemble this info into the area of concern to talk about vision and strategies.

SH Q: Should we go after them in terms of urgency?

A: It's up to the committee to come up with the best strategy.

In anticipation of the committee presentations, Matthew reviews what the Stakeholders came up with last week as criteria for presenting the data:

- List of needed information available – both by issue (8 categories) and also by sources
- Printed information available before the presentation
- Use collaborative information gathering for complex issues, other sources if possible
- Filter out unnecessary information that wasn't requested
- Have the expert available or have a process for gathering questions and getting answers
- Deal with bias/credibility issues before delivery or during the debrief
- Deliver information in bite-size pieces
- When the info is more controversial, there needs to be more sources for the information
- Separate objective data from subjective conclusions
- Present background information – resources and methodology
- Present all the needed information that is available in the report
- Remove recommendations/strategies from presentation – only show requested data

SH Q: If the list of requested information is not complete, can we expand it?

A: Yes – but keep your eye on goal – we want a common understanding of currently happening. If the new information is going to help us come to that understanding, then yes, we can absolutely add it.

SH Comment: In the presentation criteria of having information available prior to meeting – include the date and source of the information.

Matthew then previews how he will debrief information presentations with the Stakeholders by asking a few clarifying questions:

- Does everyone understand what has been presented here?
- What of this presentation do we need to retain to do our work?
- Has this raised other questions that need to be addressed? Is there more information that we need?

SH Q: It seems reasonable to me that what people want in Sitka would have an effect on the kind of information we need. I'm wondering – shouldn't we be doing something like conducting a survey, finding out what the community wants? Personally, I think if we knew what the people of Sitka want, that would help us know what information to go after in this phase.

A: Before we do the vision, before we decide what we want, we have to have an understanding of what's currently happening. I.e. the cruise ship dock issue is really hot, there's obviously some stuff going on. But without debating whether or not there should be one, we need to come to consensus about where we're at with that issue right now, that this is what we know about it now. Once we've reached agreement, then we step into visioning. Then we'll know where we stand and can go from there.

SH Q: We call this the info-gathering stage, but when we get to visioning, there might be some info-gathering still, like gathering community opinions. Do we get to pursue those answers then?

A: yes.

SH Q: We've already said we feel like our time might be wasted because we don't have an accurate representation of demographics. I think that by taking a survey, it might be a way to get the opinions of everybody that's not here.

A: That makes sense. Ideally, everybody that needs to be here would be here. Secondly, I hope the Stakeholders are reaching out to those folks as we work through this.

Regarding a survey – we ran thru some scenarios with the Steering Committee the other day. The reality is that we only have \$6000 to spend on all information gathering needs, and that doesn't pay for an official survey. If it's done informally, there will be credibility questions.

On May 4 a big public meeting is scheduled. This is a chance to show the community what we're doing and get their feedback. If we're missing it, they need to tell us or get involved. The process also needs you folks reaching into those populations that aren't at the table and gathering their perspectives and feedback.

SH comment: Coming to a common understanding includes a common understanding of what the community is thinking. It's important to me that on May 4 we really solicit from people not only a check on what we're doing, but also a public pulse on what the community

is feeling about these issues. Every time I try to talk to people outside Sitka about these issues, they want to know what the community wants. You've convinced me that a survey would be difficult, but we really need to solicit opinions and feelings from the public.

A: If the public provides feedback on something we've already discussed in this group, then it's a good sign that we're on track. If the public brings up something we haven't talked about, we need to incorporate that idea and that person into the process somehow.

In theory, all the community perspectives are here. That was the process of the Conveners group and how we got this group together. In practice, we have to keep checking to make sure all the community perspectives are present.

SH comment: I understand how important it is to come to a common understanding – that will be important to clear up misconceptions. If we test the water in the community before we've reached that, it may change your mind about the concern. We have to have the information first before making decisions about what we do or don't want.

Secondly, are we only supposed to look at what's happening with Sitka's visitors? I feel a lot of people's concerns are based on what's happening with visitors in other SE communities – particularly what's happening with cruise ships, that we don't want to be like Ketch, Skag, Juneau...so are we only supposed to look at info about Sitka?

A: It can go as big as we need it to be without it being as big as the world. There are certainly trend questions about SE. We've already been through a process where we've identified what information we need to make good decisions about these concerns – in theory, we've covered that – if we've missed something, then you can figure that out in your groups.

SH comment: I appreciate the comments about taking the pulse of community, but the core reason to have this process is for us to become experts and know more about these topics than the average person in Sitka. It's easy to hire someone to survey the community, but then all we'd have are opinions. Once we get this real information and agree that it's real, we'll be experts on these topics, and our results will be based on information, not just opinion. People's feelings are important, but we have to base it on the best information we can. I hope we don't base this thing on opinions and surveys – it should be based on info we've agreed on.

Matthew tells the group that we're going to take a break. While on break, the facilitators will spread out the 4 committee areas and all the items that go with each area to start with.

Matthew shows the Stakeholders how the individual information items have been written, each on an individual sheet of paper with the original concern category that the item came from, the urgency rating in parenthesis, and the subcommittee that item has now been assigned to. When the Stakeholders come back from their break, they are instructed to walk around the tables and look at the 4 areas. Stakeholders who have information or know how to get it for any particular committee are encouraged to consider being part of that committee. If they're an expert in two areas, they should pick one, and tell the other that they can help them too. Matthew reminds the group that the goal at this time is to find answers to as many of the Stakeholder questions as possible as quickly as possible. In the meantime, the "Other" category will be put up on the sticky wall, and will be discussed more after the break.

After the break, Stakeholders relocate around the categories they want to work on.

Matthew does a brief balance check on the groups, asking Stakeholders to take a look around the room and determine if there is a fair representation of Perspectives and Experiences around each table? He warns the group that if any committee is missing some diversity, they might be highly susceptible to criticism from the overall Stakeholder group when they present.

Some Stakeholders wonder if they can trade cards among groups. Matthew says they can, but the small group facilitators need to let Kayla know, otherwise an item might get lost.

**The “Other” category – things that didn’t cluster as easily.**

There are a number of information requests that didn’t fit into one of the starting committee categories. Matthew encourages the Stakeholders to consider who they’re going to approach to find the answers to some of the questions on the tables. Maybe they’ll also see things on the wall that could be asked of those same people, or maybe their committee is well-suited to answer, or maybe there’s something that’s just interesting to someone. He invites them to pull off the sheets that appeal to them and take them back to their groups. But it’s important to let Kayla and Matthew know where those sheets have gone. He also points out that he marked the “other” sheets that have an urgency of 1-3 and encourages them to at least look at the ones that have been identified as urgent.

SC comment: The group titles are not a limit to the kind of information you can go after – it’s just a way to group people. Don’t get hung up on thinking you can just get city data if you’re in the Info from City committee. This was just a way to start.

Matthew tasks the groups to do the following in the remaining hour.

- Identify a facilitator for the group – someone at your table that could go the extra mile to help organize your team, keep track of the individual information requests and keep Matthew and Kayla updated.
- Collect the names of other people in the group
- Come up with strategies for beginning to track down their information, ideas for presenting at upcoming Stakeholder meetings
- Check “other” board for things they could add to their list
- Provide Kayla with the list of people in the group, the facilitator’s name, and the list of “other” topics they incorporated into their group, or items that they traded with other groups.

The groups work together for the remainder of the meeting. **The following is a complete listing of each of the four groups, the topics they were assigned at tonight’s meeting, and the “other” categories they chose to take on.**

*“Info from businesses” group*

Facilitator: Mim McConnell

Committee members: Mary Jo McNally, Dorrie Farrell, Scott Harris, Dave Malone, Judy Johnstone, Vern Culp, John Delong, Harvey Brandt, Karen Meizner, Tina McNamee, Stacy Boles

Topics assigned to them:

- # of local-owned charter boats vs non-local
- # of full-time charter boats (5 year trend)

- Target species of charter boats
- What training/information do we provide to guides for accuracy?
- how many local businesses depend on the cruise ship industry for their survival
- Business trends/turnover since 2000
- Revenue by visitor type compared to SE towns
- % of local purchases at "tourist" businesses - define "tourist Business"
- How many beds by type of season
- Type & Number of jobs in visitor industry (pay, seasonality, benefits, residency)
- What is the minimum number of cruise ships to sustain current businesses?
- List of businesses serving visitors and ownership
- What are advantages/disadvantages to the community of Sitka of non-local businesses?
- Revenue "leakage" from local businesses vs. non-local businesses
- Identify "leakage" (amount leaving Sitka) of money and resources (ie Capturing value of local goods & employment opportunities)
- Money spent by cruise passengers how much revenue stays in the community?
- Amount of visitor \$ that stay in Sitka
- Value of locally produced goods
- How many Sitka tourist-based businesses are locally owned/non-local
- How do non-local businesses contribute to community?

The group gave *% of local purchases at "tourist" businesses - define "tourist Business"* back to the Steering Committee – labeled it as “undoable.”

“Other” categories they picked up:

- What are STA's plans for developing cultural tourism?
- What are we lacking in terms of historical interpretation (walking tours, etc.)
- Inventory of our unique cultural & historical assets
- Comparative figures: High volume visitors vs. independent visitors & "adventure cruises"
- Is there an accurate historic perspective (story)
- What infrastructure do we need to develop to encourage cultural/historical visitors?
- What is cultural/history they are coming to visit?

*“Info from City” group*

Facilitator: Wendy Alderson

Committee members: Chris Bryner, Brian McNitt, Mike Litman, Jeff Budd, Lisa Brendle, Janet Eddy, Mike Nurco, Raine Clarke.

Topics assigned to them:

- Zoning laws as they relate to businesses
- City Reports: Sales tax/bed tax generated from visitors vs. locals - where does the money go?
- Sitka sales tax revenue by quarter since 2000
- Where money comes from for visitor services and expenses.
- Sitka harbor usage data by time
- Financial Info on Visitor Impact: 911 Calls/police/fire; hospitals; lack of garbage pick-up cans/ recycling containers (more cans - more service)/sewage/fire/EMT;

Housing Availability (rentals?); bathrooms; services (like food service); Sales tax revenue; gross sales revenues

- Does local government have regulations in place to regulate cruise ship industry?
- Known fees and taxes on visitors in Sitka (ie lightering fees, other port comparison)
- Cost of current visitor operations to the City of Sitka specifically.
- What does the city need to do in order to collect property tax from ALL business, including seasonal?
- Seasonal Businesses' contribution to tax base (property, sales, bed)
- what infrastructure is maintained by tax \$'s
- Overview/synopsis of current tax structure where it may relate to visitors.
- Legal - is it legal/possible for local government to not allow shops to close in winter - can we limit # of types of shops - I.e. jewelry/fur, etc.; What tools are available to address these issues and what has worked in other places?
- Current resources from harbor master / possible development of harbors?
- What are ordinances on noise?
- Sales tax revenues - history, projections
- Harbor Department - who are the owners, # of users of harbor by visitors, plans-moorage
- Do non-local businesses that leave/close before 12/31 contribute to property taxes and/or inventory taxes?
- Do off-shore enterprises pay sales tax?

Items from the “other” category they took on:

- how does or can current zoning address visitor industry and local housing needs?
- visitor traffic pattern studies
- Who has control of Causeway?
- What is the potential for cultural and historical resource development? Causeway?
- Comparative data within other S.E. communities used in planning processes

*"Info from Cruise Ship industry and Capacity questions" group*

Facilitator: Peter Gorman

Committee members: Floyd Tomkins, Scott Saline, Sandy Lorrigan, Andrew Thoms, Fred Reeder, Ken Corson, Bill Marx, Jeff Farvour

Items assigned to them:

- Cruise industry - who are they, how do they work
- Historic, current, future trend for cruise passenger & charter in Sitka and SE - sizes of cruises? Global trend? Trend towards smaller, higher quality?
- How are ships scheduled to come to Sitka? How is port length determined?
- Does community have say in numbers/volume of ships/days? Through what mechanism can they have a say?
- Are passengers directed to certain shops/businesses by the cruise ship industry? How?
- Cruise Business model in Sitka (ie advertising cost to local businesses) - do they charge businesses differently than in JNO or KTN?
- What is the optimum length of a port call for the community/ship?
- Can infrastructure support volume? What infrastructure is needed, what do we currently have?
- What is the maximum number of cruise ship visitors Sitkans can sustain – infrastructure
- What is carrying capacity of Sitka: medical; fish as a resource; what's too many per day?; trails; telecommunication; roads; museums; police; dock usage; city services - H2O, sewer, garbage
- Carrying Capacity of Visitor Attractions
- What is the capacity & impact on infrastructure, support services, NPS, hospitals, SPD, airport, Trail Works, City of Sitka, STA, NFS, etc.?
- Does Sitka have enough services/resources for visitor accommodations, and does it jeopardize rural status?
- Carrying capacities of vehicle traffic/pedestrian/boats systems which optimize safety and quality of experience (including trails, roads city and state and harbor system)
- How many fish caught makes a good experience - are we overfishing? What's too many a) Sport Fishers? b) Charter Fishers?
- Visitor capacity is a topic/issue/concern. Can 3's be legally limited - Fed (???) - via zoning; What tools are available to address these issues and what has worked in other places?

Items from the "Other" category they took on:

- Passenger traffic by week/month: planes; ferries; cruise
- Emergency response plans for cruise ships and who responds - security needs
- What is the impact of the cruise industry on local fishing fleets (direct/indirect; existing/proposed)
- How can we continue to support cruise ship industry?

*"Environmental concerns, rural status" group*

Facilitator: Linda Speerstra

Committee members: Linda Behnken, Greg Dudgeon, Liz McKenzie, David Clarke, Judy Ozment, Dustin Hack, Bree Hack, Mary Beth Nelson, Ken Rear

Items assigned to them:

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- Environmental impact of building a dock and disturbing sludge at mill building quarry
- Can we maintain local control over resource use & environment; what mechanisms are available to influence or control resource use and environment?; what can we learn from other communities? Proactive vs. Reactive responses.
- What local resources/environments are "at risk"?
- anchoring vs. docking - impact of anchors on ocean floor
- What are the natural resources and infrastructure?
- impact on environment/resources and community; what are the possible scenarios for different uses? What could positively or negatively affect the value of resources?
- What is the environmental impact of the cruise industry?
- Use of natural resources (numbers/Competition/\$); Discuss/establish priorities & means of balancing competing interests.
- What new activities may affect environment/resources
- Environment impact comparison: large ship to small
- Do visitor numbers impact rural status?
- Does Sitka have enough services/resources for visitor accommodations, and does it jeopardize rural status?
- Will visitor industry affect rural status?

Items from the “other” category taken by this group were not reported by the end of the meeting.