

Sitka Long-Range Tourism Plan Collaborative Process
Stakeholder Meeting #9
April 24, 2006 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Centennial Hall Exhibit Room

Summary:

Stakeholders continued to hear presentations about various requested bits of information. The following items were presented and the Stakeholders reached agreement about what they learned, which puts these items to rest until the visioning/planning phases later in the process:

- How do we get facts about cruise ship industry? (cruise ships category)
- Needed information: % of local purchases at “tourist” businesses (economy category)
- Inventory of our unique cultural/historical assets (culture and history category)
- What are we lacking in terms of historical interpretation (walking tours, etc.) (culture and history category)
- What training/info do we provide to guides for accuracy? (cruise ships category)
- Who has control of the Causeway? (planning category)

The Stakeholders also heard presentations on the following, but did not reach closure on them:

- What are ordinances on noise? (business category)
- Visitor traffic pattern studies (planning category)
- Zoning laws as they relate to businesses (business category)
- Is it legal/possible for local government to not allow shops to close in the 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? (visitor experience category)
- Do non-local businesses that leave/close before 12/31 contribute to property taxes and/or inventory taxes in Sitka? (business category)
- What is the potential for cultural/historical resource development? Causeway? (culture and history category)
- What is the capacity and impact on infrastructure, support services, NPS, hospitals, SPD, airport, Trail Works, City of Sitka, STA, NFS, etc.? (planning category)

In attendance:

Wendy Alderson, Linda Behnken, Harvey Brandt, Lisa Brendle, Chris Bryner, Jeff Budd, David Clarke, Raine Clarke, Ken Corson, Vern Culp, John Delong, Greg Dudgeon, Janet Eddy, Dorrie Farrell, Jeff Farvour, Peter Gorman, Scott Harris, Judy Johnstone, Mike Litman, Bill Marx, Mim McConnell, Liz McKenzie, Mary Jo McNally, Karen Meizner, Mary Beth Nelson, Richard Nelson, Judy Ozment, Lucy Phillips, Ken Rear, Scott Saline, Linda Speerstra, Andrew Thoms, Floyd Tomkins.

Steering Committee: Julia Smith, Stef Steffen

Facilitators: Matthew Turner and Kayla Boettcher

Agenda:

30 min committee meeting

Quick review of what this phase is about, ground rules of process, criteria for presenting Information presentations

Debrief

After allowing the committees some time to meet as a group, Matthew opens the evening with a quick review of where the process is at, and how we proceed with the presentations and processing. Our goal for this phase is to find the best possible data on what's happening with the identified issues currently in Sitka, and help the Stakeholders reach agreement on what they've learned. He acknowledges that there is lots of information the Stakeholders want to review, and we need to identify the "take-home" points because we'll need to be able to look at it again in the fall in the context of the 8 categories of concern. The target is not each piece of information itself, but to eventually create a plan – the Stakeholders are using these pieces of information to help be informed about the current situation so they have a common starting point upon which to place their visions. Matthew also reviews the criteria for presenting that the Stakeholders created. If the Stakeholders have unanswered questions after a presentation, the presenter and/or his/her committee could be asked to research it further. However, Matthew also asks the Stakeholders to consider whether their unanswered questions could elicit a response that would change their impression of the situation – in other words, don't send the presenter back after more information that is off the target of the big picture of creating a plan.

Matthew also explains the new and improved "information wall" that he and Kayla have created. Every piece of information the Stakeholders have identified are on the wall in their original eight categories of concern. Colored dots have been added to the cards – if a card has a green dot, that means that a Stakeholder or committee is working on that topic. Red dots are placed on cards once the Stakeholders have reached agreement on the information that has been presented to them about that topic. Orange dots with stripes indicate a topic that the Steering Committee has "parked" for now, because it is either outside the scope of the current phase of the process (i.e. it is a question about forming a strategy), or it is information that is unrealistic or unavailable.

Linda Behnken announces that a panel of content experts has been scheduled for next Monday's meeting, including Tory O'Connell, John Littlefield, and Bob Chadwick. They will be here to present to the Stakeholders on subsistence, sport, and commercial fishing.

Presentation order for tonight:

1. Priority to people who presented on Saturday that have follow-up responses to SH questions
2. Others that were prepared to go on Saturday
3. New folks

Matthew presents two items to the Stakeholders in an attempt to "close" them (get Stakeholder agreement that we have finished those topics and can place red dots on the cards).

Needed information: How do we get facts about cruise ship industry? (cruise ships category)

Matthew proposes to the group that this is something the Stakeholders, specifically the cruise/capacity committee, are working on right now. He says this is more of a process question than anything we'll get info on. The Stakeholders agree, and the topic is closed.

Needed information: % of local purchases at “tourist” businesses (economy category)

Matthew says the business committee and Steering Committee have determined that this cannot be done – local shops don’t track at resident v. tourist purchases. The Stakeholders agree, and the topic is closed.

Presentations from Jeff Budd

Requested information: What are ordinances on noise? (business category)

The harbor dept does have an ordinance; they can enforce from 8 pm – 8 am. Police use state statute on disorderly conduct to deal with noise issues.

Q: I wonder if the harbor’s jurisdiction applies to cruise ship anchorages if they stay in beyond those hours, and does it apply to small ships at Petro Marine?

Requested information: Visitor traffic pattern studies (planning category)

Still haven’t heard from DOT – will continue to wait for information from them. The city does have a non-motorized plan done in 2002.

Requested information:

- *Zoning laws as they relate to businesses (business category)*
- *Is it legal/possible for local government to not allow shops to close in the 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? (visitor experience category)*

Wells Williams thinks it would be hard to do, but not impossible.

John Stein believes it could be done through a creative plan.

Jeff did some online research and found a CA plan that included zoning to preserve character of neighborhoods, limiting to specific types of businesses.

When the topic goes to the Stakeholders for questions and approval, there are some questions about how to agree on the key points from this topic, given that Jeff has not provided a written report to the Stakeholders. The SH agree that it would be best to see a written report, so everyone sees the same thing and can comment on whether there’s anything to strike from or add to the report. Another SH comments that he’s not comfortable with the vague response Wells gave, and wishes to have clarification on that point. Jeff prepared a written report that he read from, he will be send it to Kayla, who will pass it on to SH for their review.

This issue is not closed, and the Stakeholders agree that this is setting a standard to have a written report in hand before the issue can be put away.

Presentation from Janet Eddy

Do non-local businesses that leave/close before 12/31 contribute to property taxes and/or inventory taxes in Sitka? (business category)

Janet reads from the same report Wendy read on 4/22.

Janet reports that there are 3 fur stores that close down. Two are owned by same person, that family owns a home here. They don't leave to get out of taxes, it's because they're on a circuit; they go to seminars, go to sell somewhere else, etc.

There was another fur store that opened once in 2004, first time they had a store here. They sold \$750,000 worth of furs. Their only costs: housing for employees, rent of store, food. They took their money and never came back. There are also 3 other "touristy" style stores that are owned by another family – they also own Ben Franklin, fudge store, also store next door to BF. Also a jewelry store – don't know about that.

Does everyone understand what's been presented?

Q: So they don't pay inventory tax if they take their stuff with them; whoever owns the building pays property tax; the business pays sales tax quarterly.

Stakeholder clarification – at the end of the year, they call the inventory tax a "property" tax.

Q: bait in Sitka Sound's freezer - do they pay tax on inventory?

A: I assume so, but I don't know.

The Stakeholders request a clearer answer on this.

All other questions are written on pieces of paper and given to Janet. She will present on this topic again in the future.

Presentations from Harvey Brandt

Requested information: Inventory of our unique cultural/historical assets (culture and history category)

Harvey presents a list he compiled to fulfill this information request. He tell the Stakeholders it's a work in progress; that it's already been modified in committee, and it's the kind of list that can always be added to or altered. He called people all over and put together a 3-page list of local assets and resources that are currently or could be expressed through tours, programs, venues, and other approaches. He invites the Stakeholders to participate in the ongoing revision of this list, and it is suggested that the list could live on a website, allowing it to be dynamic and constantly updated.

Matthew asks the Stakeholders if they have any other questions for Harvey, or if they need for him to provide any further information on this topic. The SH agree that Harvey has answered this request for information, and the topic is closed and given a red dot on the wall. SH are invited to give Harvey their ideas for additions to the list.

Requested information: What are we lacking in terms of historical interpretation (walking tours, etc.) (culture and history category)

Harvey has also included his response to this question in the same handout. He submitted a list of seven items at the top that he thinks are not adequately presented in this community, and tells the SH that this is a list similar to the last one – it's the beginning of a list of resources to which the group can add/subtract/rearrange items, and he acknowledges that it is not an exhaustive list by any means. Similar to the list of unique assets, the SH discuss this as another list that everyone can contribute to, and there is discussion of having it exist on a website as well. The SH agree that Harvey has answered this request for information, and the topic is closed and given a red dot on the wall. SH are invited to give Harvey their ideas

for additions to the list. Someone asks if there's a way for others outside of this group to contribute to the list, and Harvey responds that he would accept info from anyone.

Requested information: What training/info do we provide to guides for accuracy? (cruise ships category)

Harvey also addresses this question in his handout, and explains to the group that from his research he has discovered that most of the local companies that provide guided tours give their guides some time of training. Harvey highlights the AK Naturalist course taught every year at UAS provides excellent training to lots of people in Sitka, including Tribal Tours, rangers, Allen Marine guides and others. The Historical Society is working on setting up a certification system for guides. The Forest Service and Park Service train their guides for 2 weeks or more, and Tribal Tours has an intensive 70-hour program for their guides. Harvey says he expected a lower standard, but it's really high – he was impressed with the quality of guide training.

Q: Did anyone mention that in their training they include a section about addressing culture and economy questions?

A: Those are difficult questions to answer, such as what is Sitka's economic base and detailed questions about history and culture – don't know of any explicit training, but from what I understand, it's part of Forest Service and Park Services training, and maybe part of the UAS Naturalist program.

Q: I think the intent of the original question was if there are any holes in the training, people that are guiding but aren't being trained.

A: There are gaps, yes – there are guides from the cruise ships that lead tours with erroneous information.

There is some discussion about whether the SH want Harvey to identify those gaps more clearly. One SH points out that in the big picture, when thinking about writing a tourism plan, the issue is not what the gaps are specifically, but to know that there are some and perhaps we'll want to include a vision for creating a mechanism where we train all guides to provide consistent information.

For now, the SH agree that it's good enough to know there are gaps – when we get to the solution phase, we may want to address those gaps. The topic receives a red dot and is closed for now.

Requested information: Who has control of the Causeway? (planning category)

Harvey gives a detailed description of the islands that compose the causeway, and informs the SH that the entire Causeway begins at the end of the bridge on Japonski, and continues all the way out to the last island. But he acknowledges that we're not concerned with the whole Causeway, merely the part of it that begins on the other side of the airstrip. The Causeway is comprised of a series of islands and rockfill in between each of the islands. The pieces in between the islands was assembled during WW2 to enable a road to be built along the whole Causeway. The State of Alaska owns the islands themselves, the Bureau of Land Management owns the parts that were filled in between the islands. Harvey then acknowledges that the next question is "who will control the fate of the Causeway?" Sitka Trail Works has written a grant and is developing a plan to make the Causeway into a state

park. The Stakeholders agree that Harvey has provided enough information on this topic, so it is given a red dot and is closed for now.

Requested information: What is the potential for cultural/historical resource development? Causeway? (culture and history category)

Harvey speaks specifically to the Causeway again on this topic. His answer to the question is that the potential is in the hands of Deborah Lyons and Sitka Trail Works, and Harvey adds that they are seeking input on their plans.

Harvey then shows the group a large framed 1946 photo taken of Sitka by Gil Patrick. He shows the SH the Causeway in particular, including all the development there at that time.

Q: What about the other facilities from WW2?

A: Harvey hasn't prepared a presentation for all of the other possibilities for cultural/historical development. The Stakeholders express their interest in knowing more about the potential for other sites, including Harbor Mountain, Kruzof, etc. Harvey indicates that putting together a report on the context of Sitka during WW2 is an ambitious project.

Matthew asks the SH if they need more information to close this topic. Some SH indicate that they would like to see the Trail Works plan for the Causeway, and Harvey and Scott Saline offer to try to get that for them. As a group, the SH agree that this is another type of list that could be started and then maintained on a website, similar to the lists generated for the earlier topics of unique historical/cultural assets and potential new interpretational ideas. With the opportunity to keep this list alive, the SH agree that Harvey has presented enough information on this topic for now. It is given a red dot and closed.

MT announcements/housekeeping:

New resources on the information table at the back.

Also on display in the back is a Perspectives & Experiences charts. Matthew reminds the group that when we first set out in this process, we asked what the necessary P&E would be for this group that will get buy-in from community and assembly, and the Steering Committee and Conveners tried to get people representing those P&E to be Stakeholders. The grid at the back of the room shows what the P&E looks like today at this meeting.

Tomorrow noon is a Steering Committee meeting. They will be planning for the next public meeting, which will happen on Thursday, May 4, from 7-9 at the Naa Kahidi. This will be a chance for the public to see what has been happening in this process so far. Matthew mentions that he hopes enough SH will be present at that meeting to do something different – rather than have a presentational slide show, perhaps we could do small group work on a mini-process. It would be interesting for SH to hear from community, and for community to hear from more SH.

There are some Stakeholders who have missed recent meetings or who are new to the process, so Matthew discusses some possibilities for getting them involved in the committees. He advises the group facilitators that they could give them stuff at your table that's not being tackled. Or there is also the topics that the Steering Committee labeled "collateral data" because they are items that may be closely aligned with something that's already being worked on. Matthew asks all of the SH to check out the "collateral data" on

the wall to see if anything can go along with what they're already doing. There are also some topics on the information wall that don't have any dots on them – these are items that are still looking for someone to research them.

Regarding the process schedule: we talked about trying to get through Phase 2 by next Monday, but clearly we won't be there. As we meet monthly during the summer, we will continue working on this information gathering and presenting phase. We've talked about a visioning phase where we revisit the mission statement and talk about why we're here – it seems really important to have agreement on the information before we work on the visioning phase, revisit the mission, look at values principles, etc. The mission statement may be a concern at the public meeting. Matthew assures the SHs that the group will still work through that mission statement, but he feels it's very important to have this common ground first.

Finally, Matthew tells the group that by tomorrow afternoon there will be a website version of the information wall, showing all the requested pieces of information and color-coding them to reflect if a committee is working on them, if they've been presented, and when they are closed because the Stakeholders have reached an agreement about that topic.

Presentation from Jeff Farvour and Peter Gorman

Peter begins by telling the Stakeholders that they represent the Cruise Ship and Capacity committee, and they have several questions pertaining to the cruise industry. However, he says there are some problems in their group, that there are 3 people from our group that would be key on those issues who were not present Saturday or today. He feels they need to get those key players back, and it would be difficult to present on those items without those Stakeholders present. Tonight they will present a portion of one of the capacity questions.

Requested information: What is the capacity and impact on infrastructure, support services, NPS, hospitals, SPD, airport, Trail Works, City of Sitka, STA, NFS, etc.? (planning category)

Peter and Jeff are prepared to present on two of the areas from that list. Jeff gives the Stakeholders information on the airport:

[see Inbound passenger info handout]

Jeff is waiting for more DOT information.

Q: Ave of 40 boxes/day year round? Can't they break it down by month?

A: They probably could, but they're new to collecting that data. They think they move about a million pounds per year as baggage.

Q: Don't they have to write the species of fish on the box?

A: They don't enforce it, maybe it's too crazy in the summer and it doesn't get checked.

Q: A future plane will be larger for air freight – that's because of excess?

A: More demand.

Q: Are there similar issues in summer with wanting more capacity?

A: No – if there was need for more passenger space, they might add one, but they actually took one off. I only talked to local people, hard to talk corporate.

Q: Is that one million pounds of fish – does that include the fish from the processors?

A: This is just baggage – if any of us take it on the plane as baggage. Not fish plants – that's 4.7 million pounds.

Q: Do they bump a lot of baggage to get all the perishables on board?

A: They usually ask people if they wouldn't mind taking stuff off, or they give a passenger a free ticket if they'll get off – they'll fly with empty seats to accommodate freight. Passengers have to pay for their extra baggage.

Q: Did you get other info on DHL or Fed Ex?

A: No, but its on my list. Dan Kane thinks people ship it that way only if they don't get it on with Alaska Air.

Q: How do they keep records?

A: This came off their computer – the fish box stuff they're just putting together.

Q: Do they track who they're NOT accommodating, especially trying to get out of here, who they're refusing? I'm asking because of capacity – can the capacity grow with time?

A: I wanted to find past trends vs. future, but they don't keep that info. I'll pursue getting that, but we'll see.

Q: How much more do you pay for extra baggage?

A: I think they go by pound with boxes...I'll get that to you.

Q: Do we have enough capacity to meet the needs of people coming and going, and adequate capacity to transport fish to meet demands? I'd like to know from seafood shippers to see if their stuff gets turned away.

Q: In your opinion, after talking with these people, are we at capacity, or over?

A: Alaska Airlines – a lot of their flights are full in summer; gets back to how many they turn away and why. Passengers are okay, I think; it might be an issue with freight.

Matthew invites SH who have more questions to give them to Jeff.

For the same information request, Peter presents on the capacity of Centennial Hall as one portion of City infrastructure.

CH last year had 1000 reservations during year.

In the month of June, the schedule is packed. They have problems with the rest rooms, the staff is working FT, etc.

Next year in June, the North Pacific Fisheries would like to host their conference here, but they're not sure they can because there's not capacity at CH at that time.

CH staff is also responsible for granting permits to officers that work at lightering facilities at Crescent Harbor – kids and adults.

- See memo from Don – read by peter;

- In 2004, 9 permits were requested; in 2005 there were 22 requests
- Permits are needed by everybody that's out in the parking lot conducting business
- There's not enough parking to accommodate everyone
- They're already receiving inquiries from new operators, possible 20 more?
- Possibly need to cap the # of permits

Q: Any discussion about parking lot being part of bus depot?

A: No – this was a brief discussion with Don; I didn't even realize they did the permitting.

Q: So, up to now, they've issued permits to anybody that's applied, but they're talking about capping it, and then they'll need to develop some criteria?

A: They're already working on it, they have short-term suggestions and long-term solutions; They've involved the operators that have permits in that discussion.

Q: What do you mean by "operators"? Kids that fiddle on the dock, people that put fliers on cars, etc.?

A: Everyone

Q: Do they know how they're going to go about the permitting?

A: No clue – it's all in the record from Don Kluting

Q: Are there permit fees?

A: Yes - \$400; \$10 for kids

Comment: some of that increase came from people that were already in operation

Comment: The assembly did approve a change in age for kids, fee for kids, and they're considering behavioral restrictions

Q: Does this include under the bridge?

A: I believe so.

Q: What are the plans for the museum? Trying to relocate?

A (from Karen Meizner, museum operator): A few years ago, the Assembly was trying to get rid of the museum altogether. I think that's been stopped, I hope. We have support from assembly now. We're out of room too. That museum is way over crowded, can't handle what we've got. If Don could use the museum space for meeting space, it would help with those issues. The library is also in need of more space, so there's lots of discussion behind the scenes to make a plan to help expand the library, give museum more room, expand CH – part of huge plan, but it will take a long time to work that out.

Q: It sounds like CH bursting at seams in every way? Is that just during the visitor season?

A: No – year round. If we define visitors broadly, there have been a number of meetings/conferences turned away year round because there's not room for them.

Q: Will high school auditorium help with capacity here?

A: Not anticipating that it will help at all.

That was just in response to portions of this question; this committee will present on the other portions later.