

Sitka Long-Range Visitor Industry Plan Collaborative Process
Steering Committee Meeting
19 December 2006 12:00-1:00 p.m.
Centennial Hall

Summary: The Steering Committee begins to plan one more meeting for Saturday, January 13. The purpose of this meeting will be to gather a representative cross-section of the community to see the plan as a whole, understand how it works, and to further refine some of the elements of it. They also take initial steps toward implementation strategies.

In attendance: Cleo Brylinsky, Brian McNitt, Julia Smith, Peter Gorman, Judy Ozment, Andrew Thoms, Mim McConnell, Dorik Mechau

Budget update: The SC looks at the latest budget that came from Hugh this morning, but it doesn't include Chris Beck's expenses, which zeros out his \$6000 line, plus there was some additional amount – \$1000 or \$1500 – for the report he wrote. After some rough figures, they estimate there's about \$19,800 left, which includes \$6000 for report and approximately \$1000 yet to be billed from facilitator.

Cleo: What I want to talk about in general is where to go from here. One thing I see happening – we need to flesh out who would likely be on those committees and encourage a meeting of those committees, especially the Oversight. Last night in the Oversight group, it seemed the visitor numbers thing is still an issue. We talked about it a lot, but I don't know if we have everyone on board yet. One SH, who represents a business that benefits from a lot of cruise ship traffic, definitely communicated that he thinks the statement about visitor numbers right now will appear negative to cruise industry. He represents a view we need to hear from, and it's helpful for him to be negative. Personally, I feel that for the elements of that SD to be worded in a way the community can endorse, we need representatives on that committee with those viewpoints. I don't think we should try to wordsmith that. Phyllis went on at length this morning that she thinks we won't get anyone to work on that committee unless we wordsmith it up front. She feels we need to rework that before the committee is assembled, and show them how we're mitigating impacts. I want those same results, but I think we need other people at the table to do that wordsmithing. I feel like I don't have their viewpoint or their words – I think the people that need to accept it need to make it acceptable.

SC (Steering Committee member): Hugh and Matt have made good suggestions [Hugh sent an email to the SC this morning and Matthew presented the SC with a handout – both of them offer different recommendations for next steps], and you make good points too. Before any of this, however...I had some feedback last night from a couple of people who felt we left things at loose ends as far as where we are with the plan. People seem confused about whether or not we're done, and a couple people suggested we have one more long meeting, maybe one full-day meeting, to finish it. We could have a potluck lunch, spend 4 hours working, have a celebration, and walk away feeling like it's tied up. We could have Matthew and Kayla there and participating, but if they can't or are uninterested, we could probably finish it without them.

There seems to be a lot of support for that idea, and Cleo asks if people are going to be around in January. It looks as though most people are around the first part of January.

Someone asks Matthew what he thinks about the idea of an additional meeting, and he says this:

MT: Another meeting is not what I'd recommend. What I think is mission critical here, if this is to be a collaborative plan...we know the full breadth and diversity of community have not been represented in the plan to this point and there's lots of reasons why that hasn't happened. This is a great opportunity to bring in those people. If the reason why folks have not been participating is because they're not sure where it's going and it's too vague, we now have Strategic Directions and Benchmarks that make it clear where it's going. It would be great to bring in missing voices to get their input to make it easier in next phase, which is to get public and assembly endorsement. There will be points in this plan – establishing target visitor numbers is a great example – where you have to figure out how far you go down the collaborative path before you find camps that won't budge. I think energy would be much better spent at this point to bring in diverse groups to weigh in on focused questions, rather than having another meeting like yesterday's, which was a good meeting and good work was done, but time to expand the group.

SH: That raises another question – there are six Strategic Directions there which get turned over to committees, and you're looking at a max of 10 in each group. Right now there were only 15 people there last night – where are we going to find 60 people to take this over? Secondly, who will coordinate all this? I looked at the draft executive summary of the Juneau plan, and their oversight group is the Juneau Tourism Partnership. The executive Summary lists their duties and the group of people involved – that partnership organization took charge of that whole process. It looks like a pretty broad-based group. Maybe we could do something similar here – the Sitka tourism partnership group – to get all the entities involved, start shouldering the SC's duties, get committees together, take some ownership. This is a huge task – who will coordinate?

MT: That's a good point. A great target would be to have groups meet on all 6 Strategic Directions in January, but mission critical is that the Oversight group meets. A distant 2nd is Marketing – this plan has SCVB written in many places and we need to work that out. But you need to focus energy on Oversight. There are two loose ends for that group to figure out: Visitor #s and establishing an overall structure to move this plan forward.

SC: The idea of another meeting for the purpose of finishing is not bad, but I think it's time to put effort into broadening base, get people at the table to talk about those things.

SC: I was thinking about that day-long meeting in those terms – that we could try to get back some of those voices to that meeting.

CB: Based on a lot of feedback from the SCVB, one big complaint about our process is the long meetings. I promised at that meeting that we would start to have small group meetings at more convenient times. I feel like it's been hard to get people to a 3-hour evening meeting. I know it would be a one-shot, one-day exercise, but I wonder if people will still feel it's a waste of time – they want to be focused on one thing. Having 6 directions allows people to hone in on their interests.

DM: why does anyone here think that circumstances have changed in a way to make the involvement of the drop-outs more positive than it has been. Effort has been made to bring them back in, but that hasn't worked. Is there a sense of optimism? There's obviously a need, but are there any signs from them of an openness and willingness to participate in a positive way?

CB: Only the feedback we've had from Chris, that the meetings are too long, and they like smaller group work. But you're right – and that's Phyllis' point too. But it's a little chicken or egg – we can't seem to say what we need to say to bring them in. But if one of their requests was shorter, more focused meetings, then that's what we're offering this time around.

SH: Would it work to go to these people and talk about transition? Tell them we're moving into the phase of having shorter, more focused committee meetings, and would they be willing to be part of one-time meeting to transition into that? It would give them a chance to wind this up, give their input, and launch it forward. If they're interested and want to be part of focused group, should be willing to help with this transition.

SH: I wonder if that gathering of the whole group would help people to see the big picture as it is now, give them the perspective they need to work within small groups, so they have the necessary understanding of what the whole thing looks like and how it works. There's value in having one meeting to try to pull everyone together. It would be wise to do one-on-one contact first to advocate for the one long meeting, and tell them after that, it goes into committees.

CB: To do that would fulfill part of the exercise we didn't do last night, which was to work on all those Strategic Directions at one time and look at all the Benchmarks on one calendar to see if they all jive. That was one thing we had hoped to accomplish to go into the plan. If we did a one-day thing, we could still see which were the most important directions to work on in the event that the number of participants is limited. But the work ahead of time would be big for all of us to talk to people and get commitments from them to attend. If the original SH are unwilling, we should try to find people to fill those perspectives. It's time to hand this over – we have to have those other people.

SC: I agree with you on that, but a collaborative process also has to have time to run it's course. Several times during our process it's been limited – I think we should try to let it run a little further this time. Maybe I was the only one that felt unfinished last night, but I thought there was some confusion. I wished we were a little further at the end. A couple of other people said they wished we could get together one more time.

SH: It's not the first time we've felt unfinished, but this is a crucial point.

CB: Is everyone willing to put in prep work for a one-day meeting and make it be really useful? I don't want it to be repetition of last night

SH: When we divvied up names before Chris came, that worked.

SC: So everyone takes names of people to contact and tell them about it?

CB: Yes, and I think we should call assembly members, too.

SC: And we would make it high priority of this meeting to not only finish where we were, but also transition to those committees, so they have an opportunity to see how it fits together.

MT: I like where that's going. I don't want to divert, but here's something to consider – perhaps in the large scope, an additional piece of planning that the SC or some other group before that Saturday meeting is to tackle some of the larger structural considerations, like how to implement the plan if it's accepted? Another key element in getting this through assembly is to outline that part well. It would help to articulate how this work fits into the mix, even to new people, and help frame what we're doing and move it forward. It'll also help in this part where we take all the Benchmarks and look at them over the course of 1-5

years. We have to look at the capacity of the city to meet those Benchmarks. Hugh was concerned that we're going to end up with 6 standing committees – my point is that if you want to get going on all 6 right now, then that's ambitious, but yes, it would be 6 committees. Or, you could find ways to build this into existing structures. That might take longer, but wouldn't be as much front work. It would be helpful for that Saturday meeting to have some suggestions about how this fits into city structure, and help the committees see through what their commitment is – is it 6 years or 6 hours?

CB: Okay, so back to the additional meeting idea – I think we're going for a Saturday meeting, where we focus on buttoning up the 6 SDs, maybe focus on 1-2 ultimately, and at the end of the day we have the ability to make big matrix of Benchmarks over the next 3-4 years. And we do a lot of prep beforehand to bring in other voices. [everyone seems to agree with that plan]

SH: Maybe in the invitation to people...one is to invite them to this Saturday meeting, but also to invite onto a committee. Then we help them see that coming to the Saturday meeting will help them get the big picture and help them decide which committee they should be on.

SH: Another critical element to this Saturday meeting, to make those people comfortable, maybe we need to know who the Oversight group is. It will help others know who's in charge, and how things will get presented to Assembly.

CB: So, do we need to answer those questions before we even plan the meeting?

SH: That seems pretty important – it keeps coming up – who's going to carry the ball? If you can answer that, other things fall into place.

CB: Should that be figured out by the Oversight committee?

SC: Like Matthew suggested, need some discussions among a "Steering Committee plus" group to come up with a few suggestions of how it could be structured. Then, one option would be to determine where that Oversight committee lies. I'm a little afraid of having an open-ended conversation about that with the large group.

CB: We can't even explore the option of SCVB being oversight without them being at the table

SC: I don't think its realistic for them to be the Oversight body.

SH: However it happens, it's important to not drop the leadership. There has to be somebody leading, not letting go. I do think it's possible to have the Steering Committee continue on until the oversight committee comes into the plan. Maybe the Oversight committee has those meetings, and decides how implementation will look, but the SC doesn't let go until Oversight committee has figured it out.

The Steering Committee members agree with that idea.

SH: It could be that the new committee is the responsible party, but careful in saying that it's not necessarily the planning committee – there could be a planning group and then a standing committee.

SC: Looking at all the elements last night, it would be so great to have these things going, but also a huge success to just get a couple of them going and eventually plug additional things in. Maybe we should just focus on a couple of them to start and be realistic about where we're going. It may pick up steam along the way.

SH: As we're working on the Benchmarks, I think there's a lot of them that might be obvious to certain other people – there must be a lot of things currently happening that should be plugged into the relevant areas. Like in the Marketing SD, I'm sure there are a lot of marketing plans out there, but we don't know about them to plug them in here.

SH: That's why its critical to identify key people for the committees.

DM: It does seem that what happened with the Solid Waste Implementation Team (SWIT) might be useful for consideration here – had it not been for the group that followed on to after the formal process of developing recommendations, it's not clear what the Assembly would have done. That group is still active several years after that work. There's been plenty of give and take over time; but without that group's prodding, focusing, and working with the Assembly – sometimes to resistance – that's what made progress possible. That experience is useful to consider.

SH: I was talking last night with someone about SWIT's perspective – about 2-3 years ago the Assembly came to SWIT and asked them to be an official city group. They said no way – they don't want people appointed. This process is a little different, it came through LRPC and the city funded it, but I think we could make a good argument that it could remain an independent body.

CB: Let's pick a date for the Saturday meeting, and also another date to get together again to figure out who to invite and to plan for that meeting.

Jan 13 is picked as the day for the Sat meeting.

SC: and the other meeting is to get us together to divide up names of people to call?

CB: We could try to do that now, but we'd need a little more info before contacting them – I heard some people say they'd like to be clear on the action areas to help extend the invitation.

DM: My suggestion about calling people – it seems important to make notes out of those conversations so there is as much clarity as possible in terms of responses to those conversations. That could be a range from resistance to coming to another meeting, or wanting to know precisely what's on the agenda – just what their response is. It seems central to me to know whether or not there really is enough good will underlying the attitude of these folks to expect a positive sort of participation.

CB: You mean that they won't be picked on, assured that they'll be listened to?

DM: yes, and the old question of whether they think there's enough trust, or if there's an underlying hostility – just generate as much clarity from these calls in terms about what to expect at that meeting.

CB: one thing to reassure them is that it will be all small group work, and no public statements about opinion – some people have been nervous about that. We're not going to process big issues in the whole group.

SC: It seems we need to all be on the same page before we go into that; all of us know people personally that have been to meetings in the past; people we know well who we would like to get back in the process, so I say we start contacting them now. Then let's set another time for this group to prepare for calling the others, and let's try to expand this group to plan for that. We could send out an email to ask people to come and help plan, and also work on a script to help people have talking points when they call folks.

Dec 28 is chosen as the next meeting time for the Steering Committee. Kayla will provide a list of all original Stakeholders and Conveners, along with their phone numbers for that meeting. In the meantime, the SC members will start working on a script of talking points for inviting people. It was suggested that the overarching principles for the plan be part of that script.

The group then talks more about the details for the Saturday meeting – they decide on the hours of 10-3, with an hour for lunch/social time. The Exhibit Room has been reserved. The meeting will be facilitated, and, following a brief opening review of where we're at in the

process, the participants will mostly work in small groups to further define all 6 Strategic Directions, similar to last night. Matthew points out that it might be helpful to not refer to those groups as “committees,” because at this stage, it’s really just work groups to help further define the Strategic Directions. This may also help people understand their level of commitment.

In preparation for that meeting, in addition to recruiting participants, the Steering Committee will put together some suggestions on how this plan could be implemented, and provide those suggestions to the Oversight group to further work on during the Saturday meeting. Cleo and Brian decide they will try to talk with John Stein to hear his advice on working this into existing city structure. Matthew has also suggested that each group have focused questions to answer during those small group sessions, rather than just having 6 open-ended dialogues.

Cleo will send an email to start putting together talking points for the meeting recruitment, and she will include some Stakeholders in that email to ask their help in this next step. She indicates there will probably be another SC meeting between Dec 28 and Jan 13. Cleo will also try to schedule a work session with the Assembly for the end of January. Cleo asks Kayla to provide a concise 1-2 page synopsis of each of the Strategic Directions to help with the talking points for inviting people.

Finally, Kayla asks if printing costs for the report are included in the budget, and Cleo says it looks like it. Kayla also asks the SC to consider how many hard copies they think they’ll need. And she points out that the contract she and Matthew have now expires on Jan 31, and requires the final report to be done by then and inclusive of Assembly and LRPC feedback.