

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

Summary: The Steering Committee plans for the January 13th Stakeholder meeting, and strategizes about getting a broad diversity of former Stakeholders and Conveners to attend.

In attendance: Cleo Brylinsky, Peter Gorman, Mim McConnell, Brian McNitt, Dorik Mechau, Julia Smith, Stef Steffen, Andrew Thoms, Matthew Turner and Kayla Boettcher.

Cleo begins by passing out a list of “talking points” – key pieces of information about the Jan 13th meeting to help people make the phone calls to invite others. She also passes out packets of information that Kayla put together, including a list of the overriding principles for the plan, a short synopsis of each of the Strategic Directions, and a list of people to contact (which includes all current and former Stakeholders, as well as people from the Conveners group). Finally, she has a few copies of the updated, detailed Strategic Directions. There is red and blue font on these pages – Kayla explains to the group that the red copy indicates things that were added or changed at the last Stakeholder meeting, and the blue indicates editorial comments. Someone asks if the things that were added at the Stakeholder meeting had reached consensus within the Stakeholder group, and Kayla said they hadn’t – that’s why they’re highlighted in red. She told the group that the work was done in small groups at that meeting, and the whole group was not asked if they could endorse everything. Because those items haven’t passed consensus in the group, these might need to be revisited.

Some members of the Steering Committee met with John Stein yesterday to talk with him about the plan, let him know what we’re planning for Jan, and to hear from him about how he sees this work fitting into work of city. They reported that he is really supportive of what we’re doing. They asked for his input on how it could continue once the Stakeholders pass it over, if the Oversight Strategic Direction should work SCVB or not. He talked about the head tax money and how this could fit in with SCVB work, and the SC feels he is already ahead of this group in thinking about this. He proposed we think about establishing an overarching Visitor Bureau – something SCVB could fit under/with, and maybe the head tax money could hire someone to oversee functioning of volunteer committees, visitor bureau, etc. They said he also agreed with them that the implementation of this plan has to respect the collaborative input, and as this work moves forward, there needs to continue to be a mechanism to have all voices be heard. Also, he wondered if there is a new committee established, that perhaps it not be an appointed committee, but rather that the Stakeholders and SC think carefully about who should carry this process on, how it should be staffed, etc. He also talked about the need to be careful/sensitive to the current structure – changes could take place over time, stepwise, gradual, while working with everyone involved. Someone asks if they talked with John about the role of the city planning office – they said not really, but they did point out how one of the Strategic Directions points toward that office.

Matthew: In terms of strategy and completion of this plan – there’s a section called implementation, which is still largely a blank page at this point. What do you recommend for

how that section should be written? Do we make an indication about working it out with the City and finding existing structures, or do we work it out at the next meeting?

CB: Hopefully, if we have people that need to be there to address the oversight direction, we can have more conversation with them about things we talked about with John. After getting their input, maybe there could be more specific recommendations as part of the report, with concrete suggestions to make to Assembly.

Several people agree that it seems the Oversight concept is the most important point now, because it's going to coordinate and help implement the others. They says it should be a strong point in the report, to point out that this Strategic Direction should happen first. That will help focus energy and centralize the leadership.

There is some discussion about whether the Oversight Strategic Direction should be discussed first, with the whole group, at the Jan meeting, allowing everyone there to give attention to that topic before breaking into small groups for focused work on the other Strategic Directions. One person points out that it should be the front focus and taken care of first, so the meeting doesn't end with that unresolved. On the other hand, another person says it may be difficult to move the large group through that conversation, and if a small group works through it and brings it back to the whole group, it may be smoother. In the end, most people seem to agree that it shouldn't be a whole-group conversation, but perhaps a majority of the group could be involved in that discussion. It was also proposed that it is emphasized to everyone on the 13th that the Oversight direction will be the first area of focus, and as they work through the other strategic directions, they should be thinking about how it could work with the Oversight direction, and how that Oversight board should be structured. The work of the small groups can be focused on filling out more benchmarks, and how to structure those directions and get them going.

MT: Also, as a point of clarity, there was a seed planted by me early, but I want to steer away from it. We have these Strategic Directions, and these SDs need a group of people to sit down as a team to think through them holistically, round them out, put in more benchmarks, and develop an implementation plan which is concrete. I've slipped, and planted an assumption that there would be ongoing committees for each – but until we have a handle on the overall structure, it's dangerous to put that idea out there. Even as we talk to people about the meeting on the 13th, tell them we just need people to think all the way through the strategic directions. Once we have them all put together, we'll better understand whether this is best for a committee or within an existing structure. We're not asking anyone to join a board yet. At least for one day, we need people to talk through this, but it's not ongoing.

The SC generally agrees, but they ask Matthew if he thinks it would be appropriate for the Stakeholders to think about who should be on the Oversight committee, or at least the Perspectives and Experiences that should be represented on that committee. Matthew agrees that this is appropriate. He says there are a couple of spots that really need some work, and he feels the more concrete the implementation ideas can get at the January meeting, the better. But, he says, in order to do that successfully, the right people need to be in the room – that is, the people who are privy to information about how these realistically can get implemented. One of the SC members comments that it's probably not likely that we'll have

all the people we hope to have at the January meeting, but even after that meeting, others could go talk with the people – the experts – that were missing.

Presenting to Assembly

The discussion then turns to how and when the plan would be presented to the Assembly. John Stein mentioned possibly having a work session on Jan 30 or Feb 6. Someone points out that it really should be the LRPC, together with the Steering Committee, who presents it to the Assembly, since the process started under the charge of the LRPC. It also becomes apparent that the LRPC should also spend some of their meeting time reviewing the plan prior to presenting it to the Assembly. Cleo says technically she promised the Assembly that they'd have the plan in January, but in talking with John Stein, it doesn't seem there's a huge rush, and taking a little extra time to review it well shouldn't be a problem. The group loosely decided to ask for an Assembly work session on Feb 6, but if it looks like the LRPC will need more time to review it, maybe it could get pushed back to the 20th. Also, Stef will invite the other LRPC members to attend the Stakeholder meeting on Jan 13 to help familiarize them with the work.

Calls for Jan 13 meeting

Next, the group has agreed to divide up the list of Stakeholders and Conveners to call them about attending the meeting on Jan 13. Key tasks for those making the calls: go through the talking points with everyone, take notes on their reactions, try to get commitments from people if they'll attend, and try to get email addresses so SC members can do a personal follow-up reminder. Kayla will also send a blanket email to everyone and include the principles, strategic directions, and talking points.

After they divide up all the names and decide who will call each person, the SC reviews the talking points. One of the statements indicated that the caller would tell everyone about the Strategic Directions, and then ask them to indicate which one they think they'd like to work on. The group decided that instead of asking them to make that indication over the phone, to ask them instead to just think about it and maybe have some idea when they attend the meeting. One person asked if child care should be offered – if that would make the meeting easier to attend for anyone. After some deliberation, Cleo told everyone to keep that in mind as a possibility, and if anyone indicated that they would come except for needing child care, to let her know and she'd look into it.

Next SC Meeting

SC will meet again at noon on Thursday, Jan 11. This will allow Matthew and Kayla to talk through the structure for the Jan 13th meeting, to hear back from the SC members about how many people they think will attend, and to solve any last logistical issues.

Structuring the Oversight Committee

Revisiting the topic of how the Oversight Committee might be structured, the group ponders again the possibility of creating a new kind of city structure. At a previous meeting, Brian had commented that the Solid Waste Implementation Team had been invited to be an official city committee, but they had refused, because it is very important to them that they not be subject to political appointments. The SC wonders about the possibility of having more of an election-based process for filling seats on the board, or requiring that the seats are filled by specific perspectives and experiences from relevant interest groups. If this group

is in charge of a million dollars and potentially even have a city employee, it is likely that the city will require some official tie-in to the board, but perhaps there could be a mix of appointed seats and elected seats. One person commented that “this is another opportunity to be creative – we don’t have to be bound by past patterns.”

Before everyone leaves, Matthew presents one more idea for them to think about. He believes that having more concrete, directed questions on each of the Strategic Directions may help get us to better answers on the 13th, rather than just saying, “Look at all this stuff – what do you think?” So, do we put the head tax into the mix? What elements do we put in front of them and have them ponder. He asks the SC to think about the roadblocks and questions that come up – things that need answers to feel like this plan could work and have people buy into it and endorse it – both the Assembly and the community.

Most of the group leaves at this point, but a few remain and speak briefly about the issue of setting target visitor numbers. All of them agree that we need to emphasize how the plan and the process work to establish these numbers – that’s its not about the number, in the end. They are concerned that the people who are nervous about setting a level are missing the point about having indicators that influence that decision, and that the decision will be made more than once in the future, based on better information and a more monitored approach. One person points out the need to be careful in how this is discussed publicly – while we may be trying to convince some business owners that the statements we have now are not actually limits (because of the goal to meet 2006 visitor levels next year when we know we’re getting fewer boats), if that idea is promoted too strongly, the “other side” may perceive that this plan is only promoting growth. Stef has made a suggestion for the wording of these statements within the plan, and one of his phrases says “[2006 levels are manageable]...and those numbers can be increased at a rate that is tied to the degree of success achieved in managing the visitor impacts.” This seems to capture the overall goal of this plan, which is to monitor the industry and mitigate impacts – “if the impacts can be mitigated, then why not allow the growth?” says one of the SC members.

They also spoke briefly about the need to emphasize to the Assembly how this plan does not propose another level of bureaucracy, but is pulling on community resources to monitor the visitor industry, keeping public process involved to oversee the implementation of this. It’s also obvious that the public has said they want to be involved with monitoring the visitor industry, and hopefully the Assembly will support us in structuring the Oversight board so people that have a stake in the Visitor industry are represented on that board.