



**Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting Agenda  
CBJ Assembly Chambers**

**December 12, 2019, 6:00 p.m.**

**Steering Committee Members Present:**

Christine Woll, Chair  
Karena Perry, Vice Chair  
Betsy Brenneman  
Kirby Day  
Daniel Glidmann  
Michael Heumann

Laura Martinson  
Jill Ramiel  
Patty Ware  
Nathaniel Dye, Planning Commission Liaison  
Iris Matthews (telephonic)  
Tahlia Gerber, Youth Representative

**Steering Committee Members Absent:** Ricardo Worl

**Staff:**

Alexandra Pierce, Planning Manager  
Beth McKibben, Senior Planner, Project Manager  
Tim Felstead, Planner, Assistant Project Manager  
Allison Eddins, Planner

**Assembly Members:**

Loren Jones

**I. Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

**a. October 10, 2019 DRAFT minutes, Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee Meeting**

**MOTION:** By Mr. Day to approve the October 10, 2019 minutes.

**The motion passed with no objection.**

**III. Public Participation – None.**

**IV. Steering Committee Updates**

Ms. McKibben reported that Wayne Jensen and Meilani Schijvens had resigned from the Steering Committee due to availability issues. The Planning Commission has officially appointed Iris Matthews, as well as Tahlia Gerger as the youth representative. Ms. McKibben explained that Ms. Gerger would be late due to a band concert.

Ms. McKibben stated that she and Mr. Felstead met with the Juneau Downtown Business Association and the national Main Street program representative that morning to talk about

the Main Street Program and how it might be incorporated into the plan, particularly Chapter 3. They also learned of a variety of funding opportunities available through the Main Street program.

#### **V. Presentation – Tourism Task Force**

Ms. Pierce began her presentation on the Juneau Visitor Industry Task Force with a PowerPoint entitled CBJ Tourism Planning Efforts, Past and Present: Visitor Information Task Force, Dec. 3, 2019. She stated that the Visitor Industry Task Force is charged with answering some difficult and important questions:

- Do we reopen the Waterfront Plan?
- How do we address management, and what does that look like?
- Should we take a poll or survey within the community?
- How do we address the concept of a hard cap on tourists?

She stated that the Task Force is in the information-gathering stage. The information in her presentation is in response to public comment that the City has “let tourism happen to us” rather than taking a proactive role in planning for Juneau’s current and future tourism industry. She said the information in the presentation is also to provide context for those who are not familiar with the tourism history of Juneau.

Ms. Pierce explained the concept of a safety valve in relation to the influx of tourists in Juneau. The idea of having a secondary port to relieve the load of tourists on Juneau isn’t new; at one time, CBJ was giving serious thought to creating a safety valve port, but the land on which it was proposed to be built was annexed by Petersburg. The safety valve idea was a key recommendation of the 2002 Tourism Management Plan.

Ms. Pierce went on to explain the lengthy history of CBJ’s various tourism management efforts over the years. Since 1988, CBJ has had 11 different committees and 14 different plans or studies related to tourism. She stated that CBJ spent the 1990s and early 2000s working to find a common ground between local quality of life and the visitor experience. CBJ has found, over the years, that mitigation of issues creates a better experience for visitors and locals alike. These efforts culminated in 2002 in the Tourism Management Plan. Based on this Plan, Resolution 2170 was adopted, incorporating key directions laid out in the Plan.

Ms. Pierce showed a graph with four quadrants, each labeled with a possible outcome regarding tourism management in Juneau, this graph was an outcome of Collaboration Juneau which met from 2004-2007, and was intended to show 4 possible future scenarios for tourism management in Juneau:

- Sugar High – Juneau is unresponsive and overrun by the industry;
- Summerville – Managed growth and proactive, responsive local government; lots of new infrastructure;

- Missed the Boat – Industry is in decline, as is Juneau’s economy; and
- Small is Beautiful – Encouraged decline of the cruise industry and more independent travelers, with aggressive efforts toward non-tourism dependent economy.

Ms. Pierce stated that she believed Juneau’s current tourism management situation to fall somewhere between Sugar High and Summerville. She reported that, in the absence of formal committee oversight, the City has worked to complete infrastructure projects and to manage the impacts of tourism. She highlighted the progress made in the relationships between CBJ Docks and Harbors, the Manager’s office, and the rest of CBJ since the 90s and early 2000s, as well as the success of using the Marine Passenger Tax to improve infrastructure. In order to continue making progress, the Visitor Industry Task Force is exploring the possibility of reopening the Waterfront Plan.

Ms. Pierce said that the overarching goals identified by CBJ and the Waterfront Plan are as follows:

- Enhance community quality of life;
- Strengthen tourism product offerings as well as downtown retail, entertainment, residential, and service activities;
- Improve Juneau’s image and attractiveness for investment; and
- Recognize all current waterfront uses.

Ms. Pierce identified some issues and opportunities that may arise in the future. She mentioned the Rock Dump as an economic engine, although the Waterfront Plan recommends that the area remain commercial unless a good reason to develop it in a different direction arises. example of such a reason is an alternative deep water port. Traffic from the AJ Dock on the north end of the Rock Dump would be partially mitigated by an extension of the sea walk, which 73% of surveyed participants identified as a positive unifying element.

Ms. Brenneman arrived at 6:29 p.m.

Ms. Pierce reported that the next area of construction for the sea walk is to connect Gold Creek to the Merchant’s Wharf. She also reported plans to extend the sea walk to the AJ Dock. She said that parts of the planned extension areas are privately owned, but that the owners are amenable to the proposed projects.

Ms. Pierce stated that the next meeting for the Visitor Industry Task Force is Tuesday, December 17, 2019. At the meeting, they will be discussing the Tourism Best Management Practices, as well as several projects. The overarching goal for their next meeting will be to set up a framework for how the committee will talk about the big questions, how they will focus their efforts, and what the final product will look like.

*Discussion*

Ms. Woll asked about the timeline that the Task Force was looking at for completion of their goals. Ms. Pierce said that they were aiming for the end of February of 2020.

Ms. Ramiel asked if the Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee will have the chance to weigh in with the Task Force on the idea of a passenger cap.

Ms. Pierce answered that it would be appropriate for the Steering Committee to submit an opinion to the Task Force. She said that she was unsure, however, when the best time for that would be.

Ms. Martinson asked if Norwegian Cruise Line had mentioned the idea of turning Juneau into a turn port. She also wondered if the Steering Committee should make the recommendation to increase Juneau's overnight visitors.

Ms. Brenneman asked if Juneau would need another dock.

Ms. Martinson said that Juneau would need another dock eventually. She stated that Seattle gets the same amount of passengers in the tourist season but they get more overnight revenue. She also said that changing the rules regarding overnight visitors would help mitigate some of the effects of the busiest days during the tourist season. She wasn't sure, however, if this subject would be more appropriately addressed by the Visitor Industry Task Force or the Blueprint Downtown Steering Committee.

Ms. Martinson said that it was good to hear from Norwegian Cruise Lines, as someone with a global perspective, about the good things that Juneau has already done, such as implementing shore power and Tourism Best Management Practices.

Ms. Pierce said that, before the next meeting, she thought they should devote some time to considering the general comments on the four big questions the Task Force has before them and start drafting a letter.

Ms. Woll said that creating a subcommittee would be an option if the Task Force's timeline feels daunting.

Staff agreed a steering committee could be a good way to work with the task force.

Ms. Woll left the meeting at 6:41 p.m.

Ms. Ware asked about the overlap in subject matter between the Steering Committee and the Task Force, and whether the proposed subcommittee would ensure that each remain updated on the other. She posited that there were many other issues, outside of the passenger cap, on which the Steering Committee could weigh in.

Staff explained that the idea behind the proposed subcommittee would be to communicate with the Tourism Task Force regarding the passenger cap.

Ms. Ramiel said that she would like the Steering Committee to state that it is against the passenger cap.

Ms. Pierce said that the four priorities for the Task Force are management of industry, the waterfront plan, the idea of passenger restriction or cap, and the pros and cons of collecting public opinion through formal surveys, for example. She and Ms. McKibben said that the idea behind a subcommittee would be to bring ideas from the Steering Committee to the Task Force, but also vice versa.

Ms. Brenneman asked about the relationship between the Steering Committee and the Task Force's findings and whether the Steering Committee would be obligated to implement any recommendations that the Task Force made.

Ms. Pierce answered that this might be the case, but not if the Task Force recommendations are outside the purview of the Steering Committee. She stated that the purpose of the Task Force is to collect public opinion regarding tourism and to focus on a few decisions. She also stated, however, that since tourism has the greatest effect on the downtown area, the Steering Committee shouldn't miss the opportunity to provide comment.

Ms. Brenneman asked if the Steering Committee would be obligated to incorporate any recommendations made by the Task Force before the Steering Committee had the chance to weigh in on the process.

Ms. McKibben replied that it was too early to know, at this point.

Mr. Heumann stated that the Task Force might make recommendations but that it was unlikely that they would be implemented within the three-month timeframe, and that any recommendations would be in flux for years to come.

Ms. Pierce said that the Task Force won't solve all of the problems presented to them in three months, but that they would be prioritizing some issues, such as the waterfront. She stated that there probably wouldn't be solutions by the end of the process, but that there would be direction. She reiterated that if the Steering Committee wished to weigh in on the process, they should make their recommendations known.

Mr. Day stated that he thought it was a benefit that Ms. Pierce is providing staff support to both the Steering Committee and the Task Force. He also approved of the Task Force's attempt to provide historical context for Juneau's tourism industry. He recommended waiting to weigh in until the Task Force is ready to make recommendations. He cautioned against weighing in too soon in order to avoid repeating themselves during the public comment period in January.

Ms. Brenneman recommended moving up the Steering Committee's tourism discussion.

Ms. Pierce disagreed with Ms. Brenneman's recommendation and echoed Mr. Day's sentiments. She stated that she thought it most appropriate to create the proposed

subcommittee now, but to wait until later in the process, when there are concrete recommendations, for the subcommittee to react. She reassured the Steering Committee that she would make it clear to the City Manager and the Assembly liaison the importance of aligning the Blueprint Downtown process with the Visitor Industry process.

Mr. Dye agreed that it is too early for the Steering Committee to react. He reminded the rest of the Committee that part of the Task Force's process originated from their efforts. The consultants for the Blueprint Downtown project helped inform some of the priorities that the Task Force have identified. He expressed uncertainty whether it was worth forming a subcommittee until the Steering Committee has more information regarding the schedule of events.

Ms. Martinson asked how often the Visitor Industry Task Force meets.

Ms. Pierce responded that they meet every two weeks.

Ms. Martinson expressed interest in serving on the subcommittee, if one is formed. She stated that she'll be travelling frequently in the near future and stated concern regarding the timing of events.

Mr. Dye interjected, explaining the process the Planning Commission uses when forming subcommittees.

Ms. Pierce said that the Task Force's meeting on January 7, 2020 would be devoted to more background research and information gathering. The Task Force will be taking public comment January 11 and 16. On January 21, they will be reacting to public comment. She stated that once they have completed their January 21 meeting, the Steering Committee would have something to which to react.

Mr. Glidmann stated that he is skeptical that the Steering Committee would be able to create a consensus document due to the diversity of perspectives and goals within the group. He encouraged Steering Committee members to attend the Task Force meetings, but expressed concern that too much of a focus on the tourism issues would dilute the rest of the issues the Steering Committee intends to address.

Ms. McKibben recommended revisiting the topic later once they have more information.

## **VI. Draft Chapter 3: Natural and Historic Context**

Ms. Eddins presented the most updated draft of Chapter 3: Natural and Historic Context. She began by stating that, since 1981, most of the goals and action items identified for the downtown historic district have been accomplished. She noted the goals and action items which she added after comments from the October 10, 2019 Steering Committee meeting, as well as language which she had added into the chapter for increased context. She reported that

the Planning Commission had recommended approval of the Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan.

Mr. Heumann expressed that he thought historic districts should be abolished. He stated that CBJ should allow people to pursue ideas outside of those that conform to historic design standards.

Staff explained that most of the historic districts in Juneau don't have design standards. Staff reminded the Committee of the advantages to having historic districts and maintaining historic resources regarding grants and funding resources. Staff further noted that architectural flexibility is a part of the identified goals for Juneau's historic districts in the newly adopted Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan because the public had raised similar concerns during the comment periods. Staff admitted that the differences between current design standards and guidelines are opaque, and stated that the Historic and Cultural Preservation Plan would address it. In the meantime, staff recommended adding an action item to Chapter 3 to create a Frequently Asked Questions document addressing the issue.

Ms. Brenneman mentioned heritage tourism as a positive aspect of maintaining historic districts.

Mr. Glidmann stated that the one historic district in Juneau that does have design standards is small.

Mr. Heumann objected, saying that the historic district with design standards attracts the majority of the foot traffic that drives economic growth.

Ms. Brenneman suggested changing the language of some of the action items to be more active. Aside from Mr. Heumann, the rest of the Steering Committee agreed with the changes, and that they could revisit them in a future review of the chapter.

Assemblymember Smith arrived at 7:23 p.m.

Ms. Brenneman suggested rearranging the action items to put high-priority issues at the top of the list. She asked what the timeline looked like for Shannon Crossley's report, which is a list of resources for historic preservation grants, and for the Upstairs Downtown Area Plan. She also suggested adding two more action items: one to increase funding for updated surveys, and one to increase incentives for property owners of historic buildings.

Ms. McKibben stated that staff expected the Upstairs Downtown project to be presented to the Steering Committee sometime soon but deferred to Ms. Eddins on the topic.

Ms. Eddins explained that Shannon Crossley is a local architect with a specialty historic structures and the preservation of old buildings. She works at Northwind Architects and is a member of Historic Resources Advisory Commission and the Planning Commission. She is

creating the previously referenced report to explore possible funding sources for property owners.

Staff updated the Steering Committee on the recent Upstairs Downtown progress. Staff have been compiling housing data for the downtown historic neighborhoods and the Aaw'k Village cultural district. Staff identified some impediments to progress, which they hoped to address in action items.

Mr. Dye recommended emphasizing creativity and flexibility to promote greater ease of completing renovations.

Ms. Gerger arrived at 7:34 p.m.

Staff asked for feedback from the Committee.

Ms. Martinson recommended a tax abatement for landlords who rent to local tenants.

Ms. Brenneman condemned the construction of "fake" buildings and storefronts that don't contribute to an authentic environment. She also emphasized the importance of more downtown housing.

## **VII. Draft Chapter 8: Transportation, Streetscape & Parking**

Mr. Felstead presented the most updated draft version of Chapter 8: Transportation and Streetscaping. He struck "Parking" from the title due to the complexity and size of the parking issue in downtown Juneau. Mr. Felstead stated that it might need to have its own section. He identified electric vehicle parking, dock electrification, cruise ship docks, and cruise ship air quality as topics for the next meeting.

Mr. Felstead stated that the two main sections of the chapter focus on motor vehicles and pedestrians, each with several subsections. Other sections tackle bicyclists, safe routes to schools, transit, street maintenance and snow clearance, and travel demand management. He emphasized the importance of maintaining Juneau as a walkable city.

Mr. Felstead justified removing parking from Chapter 8 by raising several large parking-related issues which need to be addressed, such as the existing parking vs. the demand for it, and the issues with parking at certain times of day.

Ms. Ware commented that she thought the chapter informative, and liked the way it was organized. She commented on the way the relevant plans were incorporated, stating that their inclusion was more meaningful when they were mentioned in context with the topic to which they related.

Ms. Pierce suggested turning the list of relevant plans into a graphic or sidebar, as well as shortening them.



Mr. Felstead acknowledged that it was a dense section but stated that he wanted it to be a decent primer. He reported that he had received newer data since the previous week regarding issues with the number of visitors per day during the tourist season. The data off which he had previously been working had reported that the number of visitors per day was not causing issues with transportation in downtown Juneau. The day on which that data had been recorded, however, only saw about half as many passengers as the busiest days.

Mr. Heumann asked if it was possible to reduce traffic issues by increasing the passenger capacity of commercial vehicles.

Mr. Felstead stated that double-decker buses are more expensive than what is currently being used in Juneau, and expressed concern about them driving down Egan Drive on windy days.

Ms. Martinson asked how old the research Mr. Felstead used in this section of the presentation was.

Mr. Felstead replied that it was from 2013 but reiterated that they had received new data from the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities. He said he suspected that it supported similar conclusions as the 2013 data but that he would be updating the section once he reviewed the newest data.

Mr. Glidmann asked how the Blueprint Downtown document would be delivered to the public. He posited that people would be most likely to see it in a digital format, so he suggested incorporating moving graphics such as microsimulations.

Ms. Ramiel brought up the idea of pedestrian-only streets, but conceded that it might be a topic better suited for a different day due to the late hour.

Mr. Felstead stated that this version of the chapter was a primer and an overview, and encouraged the Steering Committee to bring him topics for further discussion.

The Steering Committee identified the following topics for further discussion: implementing a downtown circulator, looking at streetscape and snow clearing as two separate issues, and traffic calming.

Ms. Brenneman stated that she would bring her comments to Mr. Felstead later.

**VIII. Public Participation – None.**

**IX. Committee Comments**

**X. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: January 9, 2020, 6 p.m., Assembly Chambers