



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

February 17, 2021, 6:00 p.m.

Steering Committee Members Present:

Betsy Brenneman
Kirby Day
Michael Heumann
Laura Martinson

Ricardo Worl
Patty Ware
Nathaniel Dye
Iris Matthews

Steering Committee Members Absent:

Jill Ramiel, Daniel Glidmann, Karen Perry

Staff:

Beth McKibben, Project Manager
Alexandra Pierce, Planning Manager

Assembly Members:

Loren Jones

I. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 p.m. In Ms. Perry's absence, Mr. Day offered to chair the meeting.

II. Public Participation

None.

III. Steering Committee Updates

Ms. McKibben reported that the Norwegian Cruise Lines meeting was the following evening.

IV. Review of Draft Chapters 6, 7 & 8

Chapter 6: Downtown Activities and Tourism

Ms. McKibben said that every chapter starts with community visioning results, which will change in a future version.

Ms. Matthews said she had broad comments. She stated she thinks it is an important chapter that will influence the Economic Vitality and Land Use chapters. Without understanding what the priorities are, she said she thinks it is hard to say what should be in this chapter and what can be removed. For example, placemaking is mentioned, but it is not identified as a priority; how can they know where it is in the hierarchy of importance? She said she agrees with all the descriptions, but she is not sure what this chapter says Juneau should do about tourism and downtown activities.

Ms. Gerger agreed with Ms. Matthews' comments about specificity regarding goals.

Mr. Worl reiterated that it was helpful to identify recommendations at the beginning of each chapter before getting into the meat of it. He identified community accomplishments that were missing from the comprehensive list, singling out the future Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) dock, the Sealaska Heritage Institute's future arts campus, and the CBJ's \$1.5 million investment in that campus. Regarding placemaking, Mr. Worl asked if the Committee should mention challenges with public seating and homelessness. In addition, he noted that the pandemic is not mentioned except for a small section. He suggested a table defining tourism best management practices organizations, actions, and accomplishments.

Ms. Martinson said this chapter is even more important now, since there is likely to be a very small cruise ship season for 2021, which will likely affect the businesses that remain open in 2022. She emphasized the need to have priorities and recommendations to help the tourism economy rebound.

Ms. Matthews said that she believes this chapter and the Economic Vitality chapter are intertwined. She stressed the need to think carefully about the alignment and prioritization of them.

Ms. Ware agreed that this is a critical chapter. Her understanding was that the charts at the end of each chapter were supposed to encapsulate the Committee's recommendations. She said she feels some of the meat of the chapter did not make it into the table. For example, in the section on the Visitor Industry Task Force (VITF), the only thing she sees in the table is that CBJ is recommended to take a leading role in tourism best management practices.

Mr. Day asked staff if it would be helpful to attach the VITF document and recommendations as an addendum.

Ms. McKibben said they could be in an appendix. Staff intend to have several similar appendices for in-depth information, such as for the Main Street report.

Ms. Brenneman agreed with Ms. Ware's comments. She said the action table comments seem too broad and watered down compared to what is in the text. One of the things she feels is missing is the need to make our arts culture more accessible to the tourists. She suggested a partnership with the cruise line or tourism agencies.

Ms. Martinson said she worries about local pushback for events becoming more crowded. Ms. Matthews agreed.

Ms. Brenneman identified several instances where specific recommendations and non-specific recommendations are at odds with the word choices in how they are written.

Ms. McKibben said the list that Ms. Brenneman is referencing was not intended to remain a bulleted list in the text of the document in the final version. She stated she hoped for feedback from the Committee on its content.

Ms. Brenneman said she thinks they should be equally weighted in the syntax of each statement. She suggested that staff could combine some or eliminate a few.

Ms. Brenneman questioned some of the recommendations under the City Management section, particularly those relating to CBJ lobbying the cruise lines to eliminate online shopping guides and increase marketing of local businesses onboard cruise ships.

Ms. Martinson said she does not agree with that recommendation.

Mr. Day said the Committee talked about this, but did not recommend it. Many local businesses buy into that program and are advertised on ships through it.

Ms. Martinson said she does not think that is in the scope of the Committee to make recommendations for businesses' marketing decisions. In the past ten years, the shopping program has already changed substantially to benefit local businesses.

Ms. McKibben said she would remove the recommendation.

Ms. Brenneman asked if there should be repetition between the chapters within the text.

Ms. McKibben said yes, although some repetition may have been overlooked. Some items in the table are not necessarily discussed in the document.

Ms. Brenneman supported putting priorities at the beginning of each chapter. The priorities at the beginning would be more general and the table at the end would be very specific.

Mr. Day said he did not see any gold history in the sections relating to Juneau's history. He questioned whether the VITF and Tourism Best Management Practices belonged in the "Related Plans" box. Under the cultural section, he asked if KTOO would qualify as a cultural anchor. Whether in this section or later, he thinks there should be more on NCL. The list mentioning "one larger ship per day" makes it look like NCL is building a dock to accommodate even larger ships. Under the section on dock electrification, he suggested mentioning that Docks and Harbors is conducting a study in April 2021. He recommended looking at the JEDC daily timeline snapshot to get accurate numbers for how many tourists are in town at any given time. He stated he disagrees with the recommendation against hot berthing, since hot berthing might make the difference between a business staying open or not, considering the current economic situation.

Ms. Ware asked if the concern about hot berthing was related to pollution.

Mr. Day explained that it was not, saying that when NCL was hot berthing, they would bring the afternoon ship in early and ferry people off it before docking. Hot berthing increases the number of tourists in town at that time.

Ms. Martinson said that hot berthing allows for spreading out the influx of passengers for the tour operators. Hot berthing allows them to get the tourists moving out into the community more quickly.

Ms. Matthews stated she thinks small issues like hot berthing should be mentioned only in service to economic development, the tourism industry, or infrastructure.

Ms. Pierce said this is potentially diverging from another plan's recommendations. She suggested either stating that they endorse the recommendations of the VITF, or stating they endorse them with an exception or two.

Mr. Day said the Committee should encourage the consistent application of murals around town. Regarding the recommendation to explore the feasibility of shore power, he thought the plan should note that Docks and Harbors is doing this already. He questioned whether vendor permitting should be in this plan.

Mr. Dye said dock electrification is an example of a recommendation that might be too weak or not important enough compared to the community sentiment. He stated that the VITF recommendation is much stronger in regards to dock electrification.

Chapter 7: Parks, Open Space & Recreation

Ms. Matthews said this section mostly seems to be about economic vitality, and about what makes our neighborhoods great. She said she felt many of the recommendations in the table related to others. There is also a lot of overlap between this chapter and others; she said she felt that this chapter needs to stand out more.

Ms. McKibben said the Implementation chapter will note that specific recommendations are in several chapters, which demonstrates how many of the chapters and recommendations are inter-related.

Ms. Matthews said they could emphasize the repetition by using consistent language.

Mr. Worl, in regards to all the recommendations throughout the chapters, expressed concern over the ratio of text compared to action items.

Ms. Ware said the opportunities mentioned in the individual descriptions of the parks should really be recommendations. She stated that they are not included in the tables at the end of the chapter.

Ms. Brenneman disagreed with Ms. Matthews that the information in this chapter fits under economic vitality. She stated she sees overlaps, but not strongly enough to move the

information to another chapter. In regards to the Mayor Bill Overstreet Park opportunities, she recommended a statement making a connection between the park and the harbors. She asked what the implications would be of designating the Seawalk park space for planning purposes.

Ms. Pierce said this is referencing how Parks & Recreation, Docks & Harbors, and other entities each manage parts of the Seawalk. Steering Committee members were unsure of how to navigate the fact that the Seawalk is managed by multiple entities. It has become clear that there needs to be a centralized CBJ position relating to the Seawalk and permitting. The management piece needs to be figured out internally, but for planning purposes, the Seawalk should be considered public park space.

Ms. Brenneman said there needs to be more information for Gold Creek, as well as the Juneau Douglas High School as a community resource and cultural/performance space. Similarly, the Juneau Yacht Club is another popular events venue. She recommended either cutting the summary or moving it to the beginning of the document.

Mr. Day suggested including Docks & Harbors' recently completed Small Cruise Ship Master Plan under Related Plans, as well as the Norwegian Cruise Line plan. He emphasized the need for consistency with the name of Mayor Bill Overstreet Park. He also mentioned buskers, saying that they would be a positive addition to the park.

Chapter Eight: Transportation

Ms. Matthews said this chapter has many opportunities for better organization. She stated she dislikes that the number of recommendations would make it easy for policymakers to choose a few minor ones and claim that they are working on improving transportation. Community input has identified a few major walkability recommendations as priorities. She also disliked that motor vehicles are mentioned first. She would like to see a refocusing of this chapter to emphasize walkability and livability.

Ms. Gerger said the chapter is dense and often wordy.

Mr. Heumann said the Steering Committee wants to emphasize making Juneau accessible, walkable, and bike-able.

Mr. Worl said he likes the chart full of recommendations in this chapter. Regarding the recommendation to allow use of State parking facilities on evenings and weekends, he asked if there was there also a conversation about remodeling those parking lots.

Ms. Martinson said the chapter is full of important information, despite how wordy it is. The Steering Committee members keep mentioning walkability, which is important to economic vitality.

Ms. Matthews said this chapter needs greater consistency of framing. In some places, the chapter is organized by user group, and in some places by plans. It is the only chapter where individual plans are given their own section.

Ms. Brenneman said she remembers past Steering Committee discussions about the State parking garage rebuild, and the potential for collaborating with City and State agencies. In the previous meeting, she suggested putting Walkability in the chapter title, as well as reorganizing the chapter to mention pedestrians first, given their importance level. She suggested moving the sections on street maintenance and snow clearance earlier in the chapter. Walkability entails tackling wintertime problems, which includes either enforcing the expectation for homeowners clearing snow or having increased City snow clearance from sidewalks. If the Steering Committee is going to promote the Main Street program and recommend a coordinator, she emphasized the need to expand upon the relevant section in this chapter, as well as where the program is mentioned in chapters three and six. She said it seems that this plan is calling for the City to do tourism management, parking management, and downtown coordinator management; she said she is not sure how those relate.

Ms. Pierce said the City Manager has stated that parking management should probably stay under the Parks and Recreation department. The Community Development department is working on amending the parking code to make parking downtown more manageable. Tourism management is integral to downtown planning. She said that this is why it would be helpful to have a central position to deal with all of these things. The Downtown Business Association is considering having a central position to help deal with all this.

Ms. Brenneman suggested adding a section explaining the management components rather than spreading it out throughout the text. She said she thinks the Pedestrians sections needs to specifically mention street maintenance and snow clearance. She also thinks this needs to be mentioned in the Safe Routes to Schools section.

Mr. Dye clarified that the changes that the Title 49 Planning Commission subcommittee are working on are related to off-street parking rather than on-street parking. Likely, the Assembly will want to continue the conversation on the parking management situation. He said that they might not make specific recommendations for parking because technology changes so quickly. The Coordinator position mentioned previously was first recommended six years ago in a different plan. He suggested referencing other plans where this is recommended.

Mr. Day said he thinks that tourism management is too large of a task on its own to pair it with managing the downtown area in general, and suggested two people who coordinate. He stated he thinks that the circulator adds congestion and traffic, and that Juneau should be using the existing downtown Capital Transit circulator. He expressed skepticism that the proposed tourist circulator would have the capacity to handle the busiest days in the summer.

Ms. Brenneman said the Steering Committee needs to decide how to incorporate the community visioning results.

V. Committee Comments

Ms. Martinson said that she is impressed with how long the group has been at this process.

Ms. Brenneman said she testified at the Assembly last week about the tax abatement incentive to develop downtown housing. They deferred the conversation due to logistical issues, but the matter will be on the March 1 agenda as well. She testified in support, but had some concerns. She did not want the ordinance to be an incentive to tear down old historical buildings because the tax abatement applies mostly to new development. She hoped the City would provide incentives to all property owners to allow more housing.

Mr. Day said the 2021 cruise ship schedule is on the website claalaska.com. He cautioned that there would likely be changes to come.

Ms. Matthews requested that the Steering Committee discuss the plan priorities at the next meeting.

Ms. Ware asked if the Steering Committee would be reviewing a draft of chapter two for the next meeting.

Ms. McKibben said they need to discuss priorities and review action tables first.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: February 25, 2021, 6 p.m., virtual only.