

MINUTES
VISITOR INDUSTRY TASK FORCE
THE CITY & BOROUGH OF JUNEAU
February 18, 2020 12:05pm
City Hall – Assembly Chambers

I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Meeting called to order at 12:05pm

Members Present: Chair Assemblymember Carole Triem, Kirby Day, Paula Terrel, Bobbie Meszaros, Holly Johnson, Assemblymember Wade Bryson, Meilani Schijvens, and Alida Bus.

Absent – Craig Dahl, Dan Blanchard

Others in attendance: Parks & Recreation Deputy City Manager Michele Elfers, Planning Manager Alexandra Pierce, City Manager Rorie Watt, President & CEO of Travel Juneau Liz Perry.

II. Approval of Agenda

Agenda approved as presented

III. Approval of Minutes

- a. 2010-01-01 VITF Meeting Minutes
- b. 2010-01-11 VITF Public Testimony Meeting Minutes
- c. 2020-02-01 VITF Public Testimony & Work Session Meeting Minutes

Minutes approved as presented

IV. QUESTION 2: LONG RANGE WATERFRONT PLAN (LRWP) REVIEW

Ms. Elfers presents on LRWP, summarized plan with public process, assessment, design detail and concept recommendations, seawalk and tasks that have been accomplished or not accomplished.

V. QUESTION 4: PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

Ms. Pierce presents on question 4 on public surveys. She researched old surveys for samples to consider, one relevant survey was found. A survey was performed every few years to take the temperature of the community. One from 1996 was found that related to transportation issues but not tourism management. In the 2002 Tourism Management Plan (TMP) and adopted resolution discusses establishing indicators to determine if community is in a good place regarding tourism. This was done through surveys until about 2006.

VI. RESOLUTION 2170

Ms. Pierce talks on Resolution 2170 based on the 2002 TMP. Plan discussed with non-infrastructure related issues, as well as the LRWP, and talks about collecting metrics.

VII. DRAFT REPORT discussion

Ms. Terrel – were the surveys done by 3rd party or in-house.

Ms. Pierce – 3rd party, most recently McDowell Group.

Mr. Day – Is it typical to reopen plans?

Ms. Pierce – Yes, if at the end of the planning horizon, a lot of time has gone by, conditions have changed, community changes or the plans mandate changes; so this one is within the planning horizon.

Ms. Johnson – Why did surveys end in 2006?

Ms. Pierce – I think Collaboration Juneau (CJ) ended.

Ms. Terrel – Confirms that yes, CJ ended and people were tired.

Ms. Triem – Did people use the surveys?

Mr. Day – There were a number of surveys taken, the last one was done by McDowell and part of the CBJ tourism report. The questions were on what we are talking about including flightseeing noise, air/water quality, traffic congestion.

Ms. Terrel – I testified with Northstar Trekking on findings of CJ and it was hard work but there was consensus. We presented as industry and community and nobody ever said thank you or followed up on suggestions at all. I am not trying to put any blame, but it took the wind out of our sails and we didn't do anything. This is one of the reasons I am so passionate about doing something substantive. I want specifics because of my experience.

Mr. Day – We did use the surveys as Tourism Best Management Plan (TBMP), we were 10 years old in 2006 and we did look at recommendations to incorporate new guidelines into the program. The cruise industry found those valuable.

Ms. Johnson – Travel Juneau did “Destination Next”, Liz Perry is expert on this. There have been some surveys and we should think about what has happened.

Mr. Bryson – I remember these surveys, my recommendation on another survey, we just received hundreds of public comments, and we just went through our survey. If we do a survey, if we set it for a time when archipelago project and Egan Drive project is complete, and do it in a summer when we are not in construction and give us time to implement recommendations. If we did it at the end of next summer after projects completed, this summer we won't get new, valid or helpful information.

Ms. Pierce – The intent of asking the committee was asking the committee about ongoing future surveys over the years.

Ms. Triem – we have received a lot of public comment, it does not reflect all of Juneau, and it is a homogenous group. I am interested in a wider survey that reflects all of Juneau.

Ms. Terrel – I would rather not see any survey now. End of season we will see the Blueprint Downtown (BPDT). It is premature and there might be changes that would make people happier and make people feel better. As far as LRWP, I think we should do our recommendations to Assembly, see what they do and then if there is a need to do the waterfront plan, that should come after. This group should not tackle it. I would rather not see these things done until after we settle in and see what development looks like.

Ms. Pierce – Do you think that if you are not comfortable with reopening waterfront plan now, would you be interested in opening the management plan or resolution for discussion?

Ms. Terrel – Lots of very good things that have not been implemented and the resolution recognizes there is a limit to capacity in certain areas. I wouldn't reopen it now and figure out what Juneau wants to do then we can reopen if there are things we need to discuss. A lot of the things that are in there and not implemented would be good to do, for example the indicators. I would rather not open them up right now. Leave it because it is the only legal document for tourism planning right now.

Mr. Watt – There is never a perfect time to take a survey. On some level, for purpose of survey is this a onetime survey or an ongoing need to take the temperature. On plans, collectively, do we have as much patience today in 2020? It took a year to create the LRWP, I don't know that we have the patience to do this again.

Ms. Triem – As an economist, I want to do a survey now and then later to see the impacts.

Mr. Day – Given money put aside for a survey on passenger experience, the reason I would advocate for a survey after this summer is because the general public feels like they are being left out. I agree before the season doesn't work, after the season is challenging because of construction. But I think you can do a paired down phone survey inexpensively. If our recommendation is to take the temperature down the road and do something every two years, this would be valuable. A number of us have given recommendations for this summer. It would be good to know if this worked. This could be the basis for continuing this work every 12-18 months. I would support something in the fall to see where we are and use this as the baseline going forward. Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) is doing something in the next few months, Travel Juneau is doing something. This would help Assembly going forward.

Ms. Terrel – One of the things we could use at the end of the summer in the survey is feedback on how people feel about the recommendations that we make and what the Assembly has or has not done. Maybe we should have a public comment on what recommendation should be, but if we cannot do that it would be a good place to have it in the survey.

Ms. Johnson – Public survey said we need to talk about this as a community. Big changes and more infrastructure needs to happen before we ask people to tell us what they think. Visitor experience is a place to start a survey.

Ms. Triem – How do you incorporate surveys into work you do?

Ms. Pierce – I have been part of a number of plans that involve surveys, it is one tool in a different methodologies to collect input. A balanced perspective is goal, you hear from the same people a lot, it is a challenge to get people out and participating. Random phone surveys are one tool to do that. Maybe a less accurate tool these days with less people answering their tool. Parks and Rec survey helped us with important metrics like 89% of the community uses our trails this is a helpful metric.

Ms. Schijvens – I do surveys for a living, there are different purposes for surveys. Relying on knowing population and getting a lot of feedback, giving people a chance to weigh in, people can do it from home, kids can participate, and we can look at age ranges. It helps people to feel like they are part of the process, come up with simple wording to make it easy to participate. The value is to reach a broad spectrum of people so they feel they can participate. More technical surveys help to understand the direction people want to go in. I focus on the first value

of everyone participating. The technical value is good, I love doing annual surveys every few years to compare how results change. I have noted as I have done tourism surveys, there is a disconnect between the economic value of the tourism industry and the value of it. There is a deep connection between the people responding and the connections of the institutions that is surveying. More disconnect between visitor industry and people's perception of economic value. There is still value in the survey, but take with a grain of salt as the results are different vs. just looking at economic value. I love to do surveys and would love to do one for you. Be clear of the goal of the survey and how it will be used before we just go out and do it.

Ms. Triem – If we recommend that surveys be done are those surveys for the benefit of staff working on CBJ tourism management, will they be for the Assembly, and are they for the community so they feel like they can weigh in?

Mr. Day – My recommendation is yes, we need to go forward with some sort of survey instrument to gauge community support or else we are leaving the community behind and only surveying passengers. This will help policy makers going forward, it needs to be a broad cross section. This doesn't discount issues we are dealing with. My recommendation is we do a survey going forward and it should be in the fall and follow up every 12-18 months.

Ms. Meszaros – I agree with Mr. Day, do it at the end of the season and do it for the public. We shouldn't only serve passengers. Knowing there will be a second or third year of road construction. We are facing this every year, road construction.

Mr. Bryson – If we do the first survey in September 2020, gauge community feeling, gather info to help staff, set up second survey fall 2022, all existing infrastructure will be completed at that time. All recommendations implemented at this time.

Mr. Watt – Caution against the idea that there will be a summer without construction. Sealaska Heritage will have upcoming construction. Norwegian Cruise Line proposal may turn into a big construction project, seawalk and dock infill areas, Develop Juneau Now parcel, Centennial Hall and The New JACC supporters. I have no issue with timing between surveys, I just think there will always be construction.

Ms. Terrel – If there are changes with port management as far as ships and docks that could not happen until 2022 so having the survey after that is a good idea.

Mr. Day – we are just charged with pros and cons of surveys, not when they will be.

Ms. Triem – Happy to leave these questions to survey experts. Ms. Perry from Travel Juneau is here and can give us an update on what has been done.

Ms. Perry – President and CEO of Travel Juneau. Most recent survey is with MMGY Global. They have surveyed over 500 communities with Destination Next, it is a residential survey. It meets the need to poll residents on how they feel about the industry as they feel about Juneau as an entire destination, includes meeting facilities, airline and flights.

Ms. Triem – We have some kind of a baseline.

Ms. Perry – The survey is on TravelJuneau.com and you can see the results of the survey.

Mr. Day – The LRWP was a very long process to develop. Listening to staff, looking at list and seeing that 50% of items have been achieved and many of the unachieved CBJ does not have control over. I don't see the benefit of reopening the plan unless the Assembly sees issues they want to deal with. Mr. Watt mentioned Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) dock, one of our first meetings someone asked me if I wanted to open the waterfront plan so NCL could open the dock. That is not the case, I was questioning the benefit of opening it. After discussion with legal department, whether NCL works with CBJ or not, opening plan may not be required. With only half completed, and still more to do that is planned, someone needs to decide more than me if that is needed.

Ms. Pierce – NCL purchased Mixed Use 2, they can apply to rezone, apply for conditional use permit, and they can enter into discussion with city for use of tidelands. Opening an entire plan to deal with one parcel is generally not done within the planning world because we have a process to deal with single parcels. Plans are much higher level than an individual parcel or site plan.

Mr. Bryson – How did a whale and an island get on the waterfront if it was not in the LRWP?

Ms. Elfers – An island is in the LRWP and a park and seawalk is there.

Ms. Pierce – Every detail and specific items do not get into plans, they are higher level.

Ms. Triem – The reason for my concern with LRWP is I want reassurance that this plan that was written in the early 2000's is still adequate. I don't want to reopen it if it is not necessary but I want to be reassured that it is adequately addressing the growth and future potential impacts. Resolution 2170, section I, paragraph E, while vague says CBJ wants to maintain its strong position in the cruise tourism marketplace. Sounds like its saying "keep growing." I am not sure this is still the case, we want to manage it better. In some sort of policy and infrastructure plans. Maybe we can't do this through the LRWP and not for one particular parcel.

Mr. Day – If something was to come about that required this thing to be reevaluated, then maybe. But at the time it was created, it was forward thinking. If we can get the last two pieces of the seawalk completed, it would help a lot. On Resolution 2170, section E, I think we can strengthen and maintain our strong position without supporting untethered growth. This is a lot of what we are working on.

Ms. Terrel – I think the tourism management plan, reflected in Resolution 2170, is pretty good and pretty thorough. I wouldn't want to see it reopened. We may need to amend it in some way in the future. The resolution is still effective.

Mr. Day – A lot of what is in Resolution 2170 is still valid. It could be reworked to better relate to today's Juneau instead of early 2000's Juneau.

VIII. UPCOMING MEETINGS

Ms. Triem – scheduling, meeting planned for Feb. 25th at 12:05pm. I am worried to start tackling a draft if we have only 90 minutes. I suggest cancelling next Tuesday and move the next meeting to the 4th. Our next meeting is March 4th at 4:30pm the Feb. 25th meeting is cancelled. Also schedule 10am meeting March 8th.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting Adjourned 1:14pm.