To: CBJ Mayor, Assembly, and Visitor Industry Task Force Date:11/ 5 2026

From: Katharine Coghill

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Regarding: **Comments on VITF 2.0 Recommendations Public Review Draft**

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the VITF preliminary recommendations.

Juneau residents need a task force that is designed to protect residents who don't have multimillion dollar teams of lobbyists. We need you to protect our homes, our waters, our forests, our trails, our fish and wildlife and their habitats against the Goliath of the cruise ship industry.

"We the people" of Juneau need protection from an aggressive system of multinational cruise ship corporations that threaten to drain every bit of value from our home if additional defensive actions are not taken. I will pause here to make a clear distinction that I am not referring to locally owned tourism businesses. I am referring narrowly to the corporations that have proven themselves to be interested only in maximizing profits with no care for the impacts on our air, our water, our food, our health. In the face of this massive industry, we do not need industry promotion, we need protection from exploitation.

As a task force reporting to the City and Borough of Juneau, we need a body that will help the CBJ Assembly serve their constituents by protecting residents, maximizing CBJ financial gains through tourism taxes and fees, and prevent the destruction of everything that makes us beautiful, magical, and alluring to visitors and residents.

Specifically:

1) **The goals and the priorities of the VITF must be solidly rooted in the Tourism Best Management Practices mandate to create a balance between tourism and community well-being. TBMP states: "C<u>ommunity Impact: Addresses tourist activities affecting local life, access to public spaces, and the balance between tourism and community well-being</u>". Our community is currently suffering from the failure to create balance. Residents are consistently begging for relief from an invasion by the cruise ship industry. The pendulum has swung vastly too far towards unfettered exploitation and the course needs a strong correction to address quality of life for those who live here. Setting limits on ships is an excellent step, but it is "so little, so late" that we have given away a tremendous amount of power to the industry. We need to claw back our control over our home and aggressively defend our resources.**

2) The VITF should recommend a limited entry system of tour business permit regulation, favoring local ownership to ensure that no new businesses are allowed to enter the system without careful review. Permits should only be issued to locally owned and operated businesses to prevent the export of revenue and a heavy reliance on importing a seasonal workforce (which exacerbates resident's current problems of congestion and limited housing).
3) Unregulated growth in Juneau's geographically closed system will guarantee that carrying capacity is quickly exceeded with devastating results on our resources. I would argue we have already exceeded carrying capacity in some realms. Data must be gathered to identify the total number of tour businesses operating in Juneau, how many clients are serviced on each day, and what locations they visited including mode of transport (bus, water taxi, gondola, kayak, bike, pedestrian, etc). Without this data we will have no method to document changes and thus we will be greatly impaired in our ability to make appropriate decisions.
4) Cruise ship head taxes must be increased. Tourists choose to spend their disposable income on a cruise to Juneau, and we must require that they pay the true cost of the toll it takes on our home. There has been no adjustment for inflation on the head tax over a span of decades and there is no excuse for the city to give away the Juneau experience. Juneau is a crown jewel of cruise experiences and visitation will not dry up if we charge more for it.
5) CB J must develop creative new taxes or permit fees (which can be directly passed off to clients) to ensure an adequate revenue stream to address problems created by high levels of visitation.
6) Revenues gained need to be used to fund a) the summer staffing crisis at Bartlett Regional Hospital which gets overwhelmed by cruise ship passengers (I work there and experience it first hand), b) assist in a complete phase out of the aging diesel "school bus" fleets, requiring replacement with electric buses.
7) The composition of the VITF needs to include an equal number of task force members representing the interests of CBJ residents, without prejudice towards those who experience financial gain via the tourism industry.
8) The VITF must aggressively seek public input on an annual basis from all residents.
9) Violators of the Best Management Practices must be penalized at a level sufficient to provide significant deterrence.
10) The VITF is encouraged to create "refugia" areas throughout the borough, where residents can reliably escape the crush of commercial operations.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Katharine Coghill