From: Laura Lucas
To: City Clerk
Subject: VITF comment
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Considering that the 2025 Juneau Tourism survey indicated that 60% felt that keeping the 5 ship limit was a high priority, I was surprised to find that there was no reference in the draft VITF recommendations exploring a legal analysis of limiting the number of cruise ships and/or visitors. I frequently hear that changing from a voluntary 5 ship limit to a mandatory policy would immediately trigger lawsuits—but have we fully explored the legal implications of this strategy? Apparently in other parts of the country such as a recent case in Maine, the courts have ruled in favor of a passenger limit.

It's interesting to note that in the category of Whale Watching, acknowledging the unsustainable status quo of the current management, No. 20 recommends exploring implementation of a strategy employing new regulatory and/or operational frameworks including a limited entry methodology or a moratorium for licensing of tour operators. Recognizing the need for legal expertise to explore this option, an estimate of $105,000-$290,000 is proposed for the drafting and development of a new ordinance policy. Understanding that this recommendation may be tricky, in this case, the VITF appropriately does not shy from enlisting legal help.

While clearly the VITF draft of recommendations reflects a good deal of work on their part, I find the points are slanted towards highlighting tourism's benefits, "celebrating wins" and supporting businesses. While it is relatively simple to assess the economic benefits of the sales, head and bed tax, it is more difficult to predict the longterm impact on our infrastructure and environment. Sadly, I think in the long run, the cruise ship industry is getting the better deal.

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