From: Serene Hutchinson
To: City Clerk
Subject: Public testimony VITF recommendations
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Public Comment to the Juneau Assembly
Regarding the VITF Recommendation to Limit Whale Watching

Dear Members of the Juneau Assembly

I had hoped to attend tonight's meeting to provide public testimony, but I am currently overseas and unfortunately do not have the reliable internet connection I had anticipated. I would therefore like to submit my comments in writing for your consideration.

My primary concern regarding the Visitor Industry Task Force (VITF) recommendation is the proposal to limit whale watching with the stated goal of gradually reducing the size of the fleet. I question whether this approach is necessary, whether it is supported by the available information, and whether it raises potential legal concerns.

I respectfully ask the Assembly to carefully consider the many concessions and operational changes our industry has already made, along with the various limits and regulations the City has established to manage tourism more broadly. These measures are meaningful steps toward addressing community concerns, and I believe they deserve an opportunity to demonstrate their effectiveness before additional restrictions are considered.

I also ask that the Assembly consider the full range of voices within our community. While concerns expressed by some residents deserve to be heard and taken seriously, those voices should be weighed alongside the perspectives of the many hardworking local business owners, employees, and families whose livelihoods depend on this industry.

Local whale-watching businesses have invested substantial personal and financial resources into creating exceptional experiences for both visitors and residents. Our industry provides hundreds of local jobs, supports families, contributes significantly to Juneau's sales and property tax revenues, and plays an important role in the overall health of our local economy.

Reducing the size of our industry without fully understanding the economic and community-wide consequences could have a lasting impact on local businesses, employees, and Juneau as a whole.

I am not suggesting that community concerns should be dismissed. Rather, I am asking that decisions be made through a careful, balanced and thoughtful process that recognizes the efforts already made by the industry, considers the effectiveness of existing measures, and gives appropriate weight to the economic contributions of responsible local businesses.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate the opportunity to have my comments included in this discussion, even though I cannot be there in person.

Sincerely,

Serene Hutchinson
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