



MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 8, 2021

TO: Assembly Committee of the Whole

FROM: Alexandra Pierce, Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Visitor Industry Taskforce Recommendations

Visitor Industry Task Force

The Visitor Industry Taskforce held a number of public meetings between October of 2019 and February of 2020 to advise the CBJ Assembly and advance community thinking on a range of visitor industry topics. Mayor Weldon established the group on October 14, 2019 with a charging document that tasked the group with addressing four major issues:

1. Tourism industry management
2. Revisiting the 2004 Long Range Waterfront Plan
3. The concept of a “cap” on the number of visitors
4. The necessity of additional public process in the form of surveys

The VITF took public testimony on January 11, 2020 and February 1, 2020 and received 43 spoken comments and 156 written comments. The testimony reflected a diverse range of viewpoints in the community and generally provided nuanced views of the benefits and impacts of tourism.

The relationship between CBJ and the visitor industry has evolved over the past two decades. Through investments in infrastructure, management tools, and in programs like Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP), Juneau has effectively managed tourism growth. While CBJ and the visitor industry should be proud of the success of their efforts, we have reached a point where we need to work together to develop proactive tools and strategies for tourism management over the coming years.

The VITF recognizes the work done by the community and CBJ in early 2000’s that resulted in the Tourism Management Plan and the subsequent Resolution 2170. Many of the findings and recommendations in the report are still applicable today and should be considered along with this report. The vision established in the Resolution continues to guide the efforts of this committee and should guide future policy decisions:

CBJ seeks a healthy and vibrant tourism sector generating business opportunities and employment for Juneau citizens, protecting Juneau's heritage and cultural values and its natural resources, and making a positive contribution to the community's quality of life.

The enclosed report addresses the questions from the mayor's charging document and discusses the future of the Subport and the Norwegian Cruise Lines (NCL) dock proposal. The VITF's scope was broad and the recommendations present a robust first effort. An implementation strategy is needed to prioritize the recommendations and refine them into tasks and should be conducted simultaneously to permitting processes associated with the Subport development.

The VITF met during the winter and spring of 2019 and 2020 in anticipation of establishing some short-term actions for the 2020 cruise season. The task force had nearly completed its report when industry impacts and public health mandates related to COVID-19 derailed the process. The potential of a 2021 cruise season necessitates revisiting the process and acting on the VITF's recommendations. Staff recommends that the Assembly ask the Manager to develop an implementation strategy for the VITF's report.