

Public Testimony to “Visitor Industry Task Force” – Bob Bartholomew I have in Juneau for 33 years and in AK for 50 years. I am interested in maintaining a high quality of life for citizens and visitors. No direct financial interest in tourism.

The good news – the committee has an opportunity to bring the community and industry closer together! I think benefits (e.g. jobs, small business opportunity, tax & fee revenue, shared infrastructure) the community receives from cruise ship tourism exceed the cost and overall impacts (portions of the community solely committed to cruise tourism, carbon footprint, risk of catastrophic accident) to the community. But we are not on a sustainable path and assembly action is needed to get us there. We are not actively managing the industry or the associated risks.

Committee purpose to address 4 Topics:

- Visitor Industry Management
- Long Range Waterfront Plan
- Restriction on Number of Visitors
- Public/community input Processes – value of surveys

Those are big broad important questions and I am sure you are receiving a lot of information. But I believe there is a critical ship and passenger capacity question that can and needs to be addressed before this cruise season gets underway. Then more detailed and strategic responses to the mayor’s other questions could be developed. The elephant in the room is capacity and we are behind the curve in addressing it. I summarize the issue with 3 straight forward questions:

1. On any given day are we at or above the community capacity to safely and effectively welcome cruise industry visitors to Juneau (while not over compromising community values)?
2. If we are going to authorize a significant increase in the waterfront property committed to cruise industry investment/development – which community “sustainability” steps/goals should be received in return?
3. Shouldn’t the committee and Assembly focus on the tourism vision that meets community/cruise industry needs unconstrained by what both legal folks and the US Coast Guard say the existing rules are? Stick with “Local Control” as the rudder.

I have spoken with numerous folks on all sides of this debate. I am providing ideas that provide part of the answer to the 3 questions I stated. In crafting these ideas my **objective was to consider 4 community values: community/social welfare, economic stability, tourism industry needs and environmental sustainability**. My main assumptions/bias is that on days 6 large ships visit (even if only 5 are in port at the same time) we have exceeded the community’s cruise tourism capacity (e.g. safe docks, glacier visits, whale watching Tram, flight seeing and related bus and van road traffic). By observing and participating in these activities on peak days you can see and sense the stress of over-capacity on tour providers and citizens.

Tool to Get There:

Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between CBJ & the industry on ship capacity. CBJ spent several years and a few passenger fee dollars to reach an MOA with the cruise industry on the

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collection and expenditure of passenger fees. The vision guiding the assembly (consistent through several elections) during this tough negotiation was Local Control, Local Control, Local Control. A similar vision and an additional 15-year MOA agreement between CBJ and CLIAA is needed to provide clarity, goals and action on cruise ship and CBJ capacity (the Port and overall community).

Specific Port Management Changes:

- CBJ should allow, with pre-conditions, a 5th shore side dock to be constructed for one large cruise ship at a time. Two other conditions could be:
 - No anchoring in the port for large cruise ships
 - No “double birthing” of large cruise ships at a single dock in the same day. (The fact that double birthing is happening is an example of lack of industry management. The docks conditional use permit obtained 15 – 20 years ago probably states passenger activity of maybe 2,000. Now we have 2 - 4,500 passenger ships loading and unloading on a single day)
- Changes of this magnitude would need to allow for a 1 – 3-year transition period

Objectives Being Achieved

- Reduce peak daily capacity from 6 large ships visiting on any day to 5. In 2020 there will be numerous weeks where we have 6 ships a day twice a week. Given that ships are getting larger, moving forward, even with a 5-ship limit there could be some slow controlled growth in overall total visitors
- Cleaner air from ship visits if they are not running engines all day at a level necessary to safely anchor or hover in place out in the Port
- More focus is placed on the quality of the visitor (and citizen) experience and less on maximizing the quantity
- Removing the pressure, stress and resource impacts that results from emptying and filling 2 large ships a day at one dock
- Local control of the port by not relying on the courts or the Coast Guard to address local issues
- Clarity for large NCL investment and community planning on a new shore side dock.
- Make specific progress on 4 of the 5 main Assembly adopted goals (November 2019 version)

So - let’s get working with the industry on an agreement. It is critical that the assembly be united and determined on the desired course of action. Take back, in a cooperative manner (if possible), Local Control of our community.

Also needed – numerous “No Commercial Activity” zones.