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To: [City Clerk](#)
Subject: Visitor Industry Task Force
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EXTERNAL E-MAIL: BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OPENING FILES OR FOLLOWING LINKS

I am a 30+ year full-time resident of Juneau. Here is how I see things.

First of all the city needs to recognize that it has leverage on this issue and you need to reject the claim that if we do any regulation of the industry that it will go elsewhere. Juneau is one of the prime cruise ship tourism ports in the country. No other port in Southeast Alaska offers the variety of attractions and experiences that Juneau does. The scenery, the accessibility to wildlife, the colorful history are all unparalleled attractions for visitors. The industry knows this and will not abandon Juneau if we show a little backbone and make sure they do not turn this city into a cruise ship Disneyland compliant to their every desire. We are in imminent danger of turning into a “company town” for the cruise industry the way things are going. That is not a place I want to live in and is not why I came and stayed in Juneau.

Juneau has permitting power. Juneau has taxation power. Juneau has zoning power. We need to wield them appropriately to make sure this remains the kind of city we want it to be.

The growth of the cruise ship industry in Juneau should have limits. Here are the problems I see and some suggested ways to address them.

a) The crowds make downtown, the glacier area, and some trails inhospitable for local residents. We are having to give up areas we love during summer because of the crowds,

I don't see a way to mitigate this but allowing unrestricted increases in visitors year after year does not make this better.

b) Many tour buses spew clouds of diesel. Even if the emissions are not obvious, the constantly increasing traffic associated with tourism is degrading the air quality here. Good air quality is one of our assets, not just as a tourism destination but as a livable community. And great strides have been made toward making Juneau carbon neutral.

The City needs to have emission standards and require inspections for all vehicles, buses, vans, taxis, that are engaged in transporting tourists. This is not an onerous requirement. Cities and states country-wide require such inspections and standards. We should also be encouraging the industry to switch to electric vehicles or hybrids to facilitate the goal toward carbon neutrality. Cruise ships themselves need to held more accountable for emissions. We have been too easy on them.

c) Permitted limits for some Juneau attractions have been reached. Those limits have been set to protect the natural and visual resources of the area. Yet more and more tourists arrive leaving many with nothing to do but wander the streets and visit the cruise ship-owned jewelry and t-shirt shops.

The City should urge resource agencies involved in permitting not to increase permit levels simply at the request of users. Helicopter flights, whale and sea lion watching cruises, sport fishing trips, guided trail hikes, etc. are at or very near capacity for limiting adverse affects on wildlife and fish populations and damage to infrastructure (roads, trails). We need to be on guard that these resources and attractions are not damaged or destroyed, or loved to death. At the same time, permits and access need to be preserved for local residents. If the cruise ship industry continues to add more and more visitors even when there are not permitted activities enough for them, that is their choice. We should not feel obligated to have no limits on permits just to accommodate the industry.

d) The loss of the subport area to the Norwegian Cruise Lines purchase and proposed dock threatens the spread of cruise industry tacky-tacky shops further along our waterfront, threatens residents' views of the channel, and 4th of July fireworks if a ship is in town, and should not be left to Norwegian to develop as they will.

The City should not totally relinquish control over the subport property and should not readily allow a new

dock to be built there (especially one that accommodates a panamax ship) without some control over how the property is used. Permitting and zoning are important tools for this. We do not need another area riddled with jewelry stores and other shops that have nothing to do with Alaska or are only seasonal operations. And, allowing ship passengers ring side seats for fireworks while blocking the view from locals is unacceptable.

e) Too many businesses are cruise ship-owned and are closed for the entire off-season offering nothing but "boarded up" store fronts in the bulk of downtown depriving the city of any sales tax revenue during that time and giving Juneau a ghost town character. This threatens to expand to the Triangle Building in the very heart of downtown and elsewhere. Cruise ship money is outbidding local business prospects for properties and rents.

The City should investigate the legality of imposing an off-season tax or assessment on properties closed for more than two months, or some period, to encourage businesses to remain open and the downtown area to remain vibrant and not held hostage by absentee owners.

f) The cruise industry suit against the City, denying us the ability to use head tax funds for general city needs does not allow us to pay for things necessary to accommodate the flood of tourists, the traffic, the inconvenience, etc.

The City should look to recouping money necessary to deal with the summer tourists by: 1) Making sure no ticket sales of Juneau-area tours or attractions made onboard the ships escapes the city sales tax, and 2) seriously consider a higher sales tax seasonally, where summer purchases might be taxed at 8-10% and then lowered in the cruise ship offseason so that visitors pay a greater and more justified share of the cost of city expenses that are needed to accommodate them. 3) If those are not acceptable or feasible, consider a value-added attractions tax on tours, businesses, and activities that are not conducted year-round.

Again, Juneau needs to take control of its future and its present. Cruiseship tourism has already reached an acceptable limit and exceeded it in some aspects. You have a hard task but it is not an exaggeration to say the character and destiny of the city are at stake.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

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