



JUNEAU COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY AGENDA

March 05, 2025 at 12:00 PM

Zoom Webinar

<https://juneau.zoom.us/j/88069534778> or 1-253-215-8782 Meeting ID: 880 6953 4778

A. CALL TO ORDER

B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to acknowledge that the City and Borough of Juneau is on Tlingit land, and wish to honor the indigenous people of this land. For more than ten thousand years, Alaska Native people have been and continue to be integral to the well-being of our community. We are grateful to be in this place, a part of this community, and to honor the culture, traditions, and resilience of the Tlingit people. Gunalchéesh!

C. ROLL CALL

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. February 5, 2025 - Regular Meeting Minutes

F. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

G. AGENDA TOPICS

2. Worksession Recap

3. Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area Staffing Memo

4. Title 49 Rewrite – Griffin Plush

H. INFORMATION ITEMS

5. None

I. COMMITTEE MEMBER / LIAISON COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

J. NEXT MEETING DATE

6. Worksession March 19, 2025 12PM @ Zoom

7. Regular Meeting April 2, 2025 12PM @ Zoom

K. ADJOURNMENT

ADA accommodations available upon request: Please contact the Clerk's office 36 hours prior to any meeting so arrangements can be made for closed captioning or sign language interpreter services depending on the meeting format. The Clerk's office telephone number is 586-5278, e-mail: city.clerk@juneau.gov.

Juneau Commission on Sustainability

Minutes—Meeting of February 05, 2025

A. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Griffin Plush at 12:07 pm.

B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

C. ROLL CALL

Present: Griffin Plush, Marian Call, Nick Waldo, Brennen McColloch, Jessica Barker

Absent: Duff Mitchell, Laura Achee, Jim Powell, David Teal

A quorum was present.

Staff & Others Present: CBJ Staff Ashley Heimbigner and Brian McGuire

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Approved with the additional topic of Letters of Support for CBJ projects seeking funding approval. No Objections.

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. 12-11-2024 Sustainability Indicators Subcommittee - Approved without Objection
2. 1-8-2025 Regular Meeting Minutes - Approved without Objection
3. 3. 1-22-2025 Worksession – Cancelled due to lack of quorum; no minutes.

F. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

G. AGENDA TOPICS

1. Reviewing the current Comprehensive Plan chapter on sustainability and suggesting updates for consideration
Griffin Plush recommended that JCOS review the Juneau Renewable Energy Strategy executive summary and action plans in preparation for updating the sustainability chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Sub-committee work plans (All)
The commission discussed goal setting for each subcommittee, with the next work session focusing on sustainability sessions and the Comprehensive Plan review.
3. Sustainability Session Planning
The commission discussed potential topics for the next three sustainability sessions, including food waste, hazardous household waste, and food security.
4. Letters of Support for CBJ projects seeking funding approval

Ashley Heimbigner shared that the deadline for letters of support for the CBJ's short- and long-term glacial outburst flood mitigation projects and the Mendenhall wastewater treatment plant fats, oil and grease removal project was February 14th. Motion for JCOS to provide letters of support for these projects approved without objection.

H. INFORMATION ITEMS

Staff Update – Ashley Heimbigner noted that the CFI Grant for EV charging infrastructure is currently on hold due to the federal funding freeze.

Brian McGuire discussed the impact of the recent flooding event on utilities and outlined projects aimed at mitigating utility interruptions in future flooding events.

I. COMMITTEE MEMBER / LIAISON COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

None

J. NEXT MEETING DATE

1. Worksession February 19, 2025 12 PM @ Zoom
2. Regular Meeting March 5, 2025 12 PM @ Zoom

K. ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 12:47 pm



Juneau Commission on Sustainability

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To: Appropriate subcommittee chair??

Through: Denise Koch, Director of Engineering and Public Facilities

From: Marian Call and Griffin Plush, Co-Chairs, Juneau Commission on Sustainability

Subject: Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area Staffing

Date: March to-do, 2025

The Juneau Commission on Sustainability (JCOS) is concerned that inadequate staffing at the Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area (MGRA) will lead to significant degradation of one of Juneau's most treasured sites for both locals and our tourist industry. While the situation is evolving and it may turn out that no action is warranted, the time for contingency planning is now.

Background

In 2023 the MGRA hosted around 700,000 visitors, mostly cruise passengers arriving by bus. Per the Juneau Empire, 19 staff were expected to work there this summer picking up trash, keeping people away from bears, and responding to disasters such as another Jökulhlaup. As of this writing, all but one of those people have been fired or had their seasonal contracts terminated.

What happens next is unknown. Many lawsuits are underway that may restore staffing. The US Forest Service may decide to close the MGRA for the season. However, in 2019 during a government shutdown the previous Trump administration ordered some federal recreation areas to remain open without staff, leading to significant problems including copious littering, vandalism, environmental damage caused by unauthorized use of offroad vehicles, and build-up of human waste in outhouses. Attempting to host over half a million guests at an understaffed MGRA would be a disaster.

Recommendations

With so much unknown, it is premature for CBJ to take drastic actions. However, with only one month until the first cruise ships arrive now is definitely time to begin contingency planning. JCOS suggests that the City Manager be tasked with developing a plan, and offers the following possibilities to consider including therein:

- Approach the USFS about a Memorandum of Agreement that would allow CBJ staff to perform essential functions at the MGRA
- Change the way tour companies operate, either through negotiation or conditions attached to locally issued permits and licenses:
 - Reduce the number of visitors per day
 - Require visitors to travel with guided groups instead of allowing them to roam independently
- In the event that the facility cannot be managed responsibly, close Glacier Spur Road at the intersection with Gladstone Street

It is not sustainable to operate a massive tourist attraction without trash disposal, clean restrooms, and rangers to keep people away from bears or warn them when the lake levels start rising. The worst-case scenario would be hundreds of people trapped near Nugget Falls as the trail is already inundated and waters continue to rise. Our sincere hope is that USFS resolves staffing issues and is able to operate as usual, but if they cannot do that then it is up to CBJ to protect human safety and the environment.