

**Minutes of Wrangell Convention & Visitors Bureau Meeting
Held on May 21, 2024**

1. CALL TO ORDER: Call to order at 12:05 PM.

2. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Chair Erin Galla, Grace Wintermyer, , Kimberly Ottesen

ABSENT: Brenda Schwartz-Yeager, Chris Bunes

STAFF: Kate Thomas, Matt Henson

3. AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA: NONE.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Approval of the Wrangell Convention and Visitors Bureau regular meeting minutes from April 16th, 2024.

M/S: KO/GW move to approve the Regular meeting minutes of April 16th, 2024 as presented.

Approved by all in favor.

5. PERSON'S TO BE HEARD: NONE.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

- a. Economic Development Department Report

Director Thomas presented report.

- b. Updated Marketing and Community Development Coordinator Job Description (approved 5.14.24)

Director Thomas proved administrative report.

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a. Review and comment on the Visitor Survey procedures, schedule and points of interest.

Director Thomas thanked the board for their review in the previous meeting. Thomas stated that she has reviewed the current cruise ship schedule and has identified specific days and times that volunteers can facilitate visitor surveys. For cruise visitors, surveys are recommended to be conducted at city dock. For non-cruise ship passengers, the museum, airport, and ferry terminal are recommended locations to get independent travelers. During golf tournaments would also be an acceptable time. Henson stated that business cards with the generic Travel Wrangell contact information could be handed out. Ottesen stated that BearFest and BirdFest would be a good time to conduct the survey due to the outdoor activities. Wintermyer stated that SEARHC training could be an opportunity to bring in off season tourism. Thomas stated the Harbor Office and Library as well as all accommodation providers.

8. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Review and approval of the Tourism Best Management Practices Invitation to Participate.

M/S KO/GW move to approve the Tourism Best Management Practices Invitation as presented.

Director Thomas provided administrative report. Request amendment to motion to include business incentives.

M/S GW/KO move to amend the original motion to include business incentives.

Amendment Approved by all in favor.

Amended motion approved by all in favor.

- b. Debrief of the Nieuw Amsterdam port call.

Director Thomas provided administrative report. Asked the board how operations went.

Ottesen stated the demographic on the Nieuw Amsterdam purchase cruises at cheaper rate as opposed to Seabourn Vessels. Holland America ships tend to not promote tours or guest do not book tours as to have a cost-effective trip. Seabourn ships tend to have visitors that can purchase more expensive experiences. If Nieuw Amsterdam vessels become the trend, operators may have difficulty maintain bookings. Galla stated that the Queen Elizabeth may provide more bookings due to their guest demographics.

Wintermyer stated that Alaska Waters tours were sold out for the day. Ottesen stated that land tours are more profitable and easier to book due to the overhead. Also stated that as more larger ships call on Wrangell, local operators will not be able to sell full price tours or maintain staff, therefore larger, non-local, companies will begin offering tours in Wrangell, pushing out local current operators. Wintermyer stated that ships markup local tours significantly which leads her to believe that the purchasing power of larger ships are not low as initially thought. Believes that there may be more interest in Wrangell if it is properly marketed on board ships so as not to portray Wrangell as a cruise ship town but more of a non-tourist, authentic, destination.

Thomas stated that her concerns lied with availability of quantity of shore excursions as well as pedestrian disbursement. Her observation was that all but one shop had significant increase in revenue.

Ottesen stated that operators promote tours to cruise ships via an online portal. However, not all tours advertised were sold on the vessel. Ottesen stated she will have meetings with Holland America to understand why. Thomas asked her to report her findings. Ottesen stated that cruise agencies sometimes change tour description that operators which has led to issues with wrong expectations with cruise passengers.

Thomas stated that as a way to learn more about the cruise industry in southeast Alaska and how best to strategize Wrangell's growth. Director Thomas stated that she has had meetings with Huna Totem regarding how Wrangell fits into Huna Totem's growth plan. Stated that it in the interest of the borough to explore as many economic opportunities as possible to find out who may be the best suitor for the six-mile deep-water port. Stated that she is unsure whether Wrangell fits in Huna Totem's model or whether they have the capital to develop what is needed at the deep-water port.

9. ADJOURNMENT: Adjourned at 2:30 PM

Next scheduled meeting is June 18th, 2024, at 12:00 PM.

ATTEST: _____
Secretary

Chair