

Minutes
Bar Harbor Cruise Ship Committee
Council Chambers
Thursday, June 17, 2021 @ 3:00 PM

Attendance:

Chair Eben Salvatore and committee members Martha Searchfield (by phone), Matt Hochman, Sandy McFarland, Jeremy Dougherty, Jennifer Cough, Ken Smith, Greg Gordon (by phone), Police Chief Jim Willis, Harbormaster Chris Wharff, Sarah Flink (by phone), Amy Powers (by phone) and Liz Graves. Town Manager Cornell Knight also attended.

Jane Disney, John Kelly and Larry Sweet were excused.

Chris Wharff, Greg Gordon, Jim Willis, Sarah Flink, Skip Strong and Amy Powers are non-voting members. Liz Graves did not vote. The voting membership for the meeting was seven.

- I. CALL TO ORDER— 3:00 p.m.**
- II. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD (UP TO 15 MINUTES)—None.**
- III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES (April 1, 2021)**

All present indicated by a straw poll vote that the minutes were acceptable. Then Mr. Smith, with second by Mr. Hochman, moved to approve the May 13, 2021 minutes as presented. Motion passed 7-0.
- IV. STAFF REPORTS**

Harbormaster Chris Wharff said there are 39 ship visits left on the schedule for 2021; the vast majority of which are Independence and a few are large ships. Reservations for 2022 and 2023 are slowing down, and stand at 110 and 118, respectively. There are 60 for 2024 and 60 for 2025 and a few for subsequent years out to 2030.

He said reservations of the town's slips for visiting yachts are also going to use the PortCall system, so everything will be in one place for the harbor. He explained that the cruise ship agents submit reservation requests on PortCall and the harbormaster reviews each one before approving it. Ms. Cough asked if PortCall saves time for the harbormaster. Ms. Flink explained that PortCall is a web-based subscription service and CruiseMaine pays for the subscription for nine Maine ports. There's no cost to the town to use it.

Mr. Knight distributed Smart Cards for parking meters or kiosks to pay for parking during meetings. There's \$25 on each card to cover parking during meetings and the town will

recharge the cards once a year at the start of paid parking season. Committee members may also recharge them on their own for parking on personal trips to town.

V. REGULAR BUSINESS

a. 2021 season update

Ms. Flink said a big launch announcement and education campaign about PortCall got short-circuited by the pandemic, but Bar Harbor and other ports have been using it for awhile. The public-facing schedule on PortCall (maine.portcall.com) will be relaunched soon with the American Cruise Lines schedule for the whole state. All of the large ships that are still on the schedule will be unlisted on the public page, to avoid confusion because it's still unknown if they're going to come. Several trial sailings have been approved for big ships, but none have happened yet. Canada is still closed to cruise ships and there would still be a lot of things that would have to fall into place before big ships could come here. Cancellations continue to come in.

She said a bill allowing ships to travel between Washington State and Alaska without stopping at a foreign port passed in Congress, but it doesn't affect operations on this coast. Ms. Powers said the industry is still working on clarifying several issues with the federal CDC.

b. Anchorage B update

Mr. Wharff said the letter from the Council to the Coast Guard had not yet been sent due to a miscommunication, but that we'll take care of it this week.

Mr. Strong noted we have plenty of time before the start of next year. And that the Coast Guard has given permission to anchor the ships wherever it's safe, so we can make the change in practice and wait for the paperwork to catch up.

But if we're going forward with this, Mr. Wharff will need to know whether Anchorage B will be the primary anchorage for the 2022 season. When we start getting into the actual planning of arrivals we'll need to know where ships are going. Mr. Salvatore said the committee can plan to work on that in the fall. Mr. Strong noted that in cases where it's safer to put ships in Anchorage A, we're going to put them there, so A is still going to need to be kept reasonably clear.

c. Breakwater update

Mr. Strong said that Mr. Wharff has contacts at the Army Corps of Engineers and the relevant state agencies. The next step will be money for study of the breakwater and environmental stuff. Then they'll come up with a project plan that they'll develop a budget for. It will take awhile to get the full funding amount into a Waterways Redevelopment Act.

d. Sustainability projects

Ms. Powers gave an update on Hannah Jury's project to create a tour excursion for cruise passengers focusing on indigenous and environmental education. Ms. Jury is waiting for a response on a grant application she has submitted. She may also turn this into her thesis project in sustainable community development at UMass Amherst.

Mr. Salvatore asked Ms. Powers to re-send the brainstorming document she created to track projects and improvements related sustainability.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD (UP TO 15 MINUTES)—None.

VII. COMMITTEE COMMENTS AND REQUESTS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Cough asked about the Alaska law creating an exception to the requirement that ships in that market visit a foreign port. Is that not going to help us? Ms. Strong said that to push for a similar change for New England, all the states involved would have to work together, especially Maine, Massachusetts, and New York.

Mr. Salvatore asked if there's a chance of repealing the Passenger Vessel Services Act altogether. Ms. Flink said one of the Senators from Utah and a few others have been pushing the idea of rewriting or making major changes to the law. Mr. Strong said the law is there for a reason and repealing it would open everything else for domestic transportation to non-domestic owned operators.

Mr. Knight said he will be talking with the consultants from Pan Atlantic Research who conducted the survey to plan the rollout of their report.

Ms. Powers asked if Customs and Border Protection are actively set up at the ferry terminal site yet. Mr. Knight said the facility is ready to go but he doesn't believe anyone is there.

Mr. Gordon asked whether the Council had approved the proposed new bus spaces at the Historical Society's museum at La Rochelle. Mr. Salvatore said they had.

The next meeting was set for July 22 at 3 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT— 3:30 p.m.

Mr. Smith, with second by Mr. Hochman moved to adjourn. Motion passed 7-0.

Liz Graves, Town Clerk