

Minutes
Bar Harbor Cruise Ship Committee
Thursday February 13, 2020 @ 1:00 PM
Bar Harbor Municipal Building — Council Chambers

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Salvatore called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

Attendance:

Chair Eben Salvatore and committee members Stephen Coston, Prentice “Skip” Strong, Jeff Dobbs, Jim Willis, Sandy McFarland, Charlie Phippen, Martha Searchfield, Ken Smith and Katie Rodgers.

Katy DeGrass, Sarah Flink, Greg Gordon and Amy Powers were excused.

Presently, there are two vacancies on the committee.

As of August 1, 2019, Skip Strong and Sarah Flink are non-voting members. Katie Rodgers did not vote. Therefore, the voting membership for the meeting was eight.

Jane Disney arrived at 1:08 PM, bringing the number of voting members to nine.

Town staff in attendance was Town Manager, Cornell Knight.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD (UP TO 15 MINUTES)

John Kelly stated that he had submitted an application as Acadia National Park Representative and that the nominating committee did not accept the application.

III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES (January 9, 2020)

Mr. Phippen moved to adopt the minutes from the January 9, 2020 meeting. Mr. Dobbs seconded. Motion passed 8-0.

IV. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Mr. Willis moved to adopt the agenda as prepared. Mr. Dobbs seconded. Motion passed 8-0.

V. STAFF REPORTS

Mr. Phippen reported that the Town is in the process of converting a new schedule platform called Port Call. This is a web-based, multi-function system allowing for reduction of paperwork, creating a standardized scheduling module for agent bookings and filtering capabilities. The new platform is a result of cruise companies asking the State of Maine to standardize booking procedures, as there are not always the most up to date schedules available. Port Call can be viewed on Maine.portcall.com. Mr. Phippen

will maintain his word document schedule for now. While the scheduling software is not a Q&A for tourists, the public can view live, booked schedules online, and it will be linked to the Town's website.

Mr. Willis informed the committee that a new trailer was bought to store the stations. He also stated that he will be meeting with the Public Work's director about hardscape changes.

Town Manager, Cornell Knight reported that the Harbor Committee added three subcommittees include marina, working water front and tendering. Hiring an engineering firm with divers will give a better indication of what the Ferry Terminal site could be used for. Looking to the future there is consideration for a boat ramp and potentially unused floats could be deployed from downtown and relocated near the Terminal but, costs are unknown at this point.

VI. REGULAR BUSINESS

a. SOP

Mr. Phippen addressed the concern regarding exterior ship announcements, relaying that the Town of Bar Harbor's requirements should include oceanic, atmospheric and noise pollution. Chair Salvatore added it may be a good idea to include limiting exterior audio visual movie screens and blinking lights that may be visible or audible from the Bar Harbor waterfront.

Mr. Willis confirmed that changes in hardscape are underway, creating more room in front of Harbor Place. He added that there are updates being made to the Cruise Ship and Tour Bus Policy. Congestion caused by tour bus schedules has created a need to restrict to two buses at a time and a tighter stacking of buses at the old highway garage with radios to eliminate the cell tower issues. A suggestion by Ms. Searchfield would be to reach out to the bus companies to inform them of changes as far in advance as possible. A consideration of vehicle barriers, such as large planters, would provide a safe zone for pedestrians waiting for buses. Ms. Searchfield added retractable bollards would be beneficial in the long-run, but the stations for now have immediate benefits. This draft will be available at the meeting in March. John Kelly stated the Acadia National Park's RFP is not out yet.

b. Press release pertaining to reports and findings

In the absence of Amy Powers due to weather, tabled until March 12, 2020.

c. 2020 goals and action plan

In the absence of Amy Powers due to weather, tabled until March 12, 2020.

d. Council action from February 4th meeting

Council passed a motion 7-0 on February 4, 2020 to direct the Cruise Ship Committee to direct their efforts toward further visitor impact studies on the local population.

Ms. Searchfield questioned what would be asked of people to measure? Chair Salvatore suggested the committee formulate motion questions and re-present to Council.

Mr. Coston suggested broader tourism plays a part in the crowding. Chair Salvatore reinforced that this committee will address cruise ships specifically and that tendering with smaller boats would make a difference. Mr. Strong stated that cruise ships are still under 10% of all traffic and we will eventually lose ships due to passenger maximum cap.

Mr. Dobbs commented that the public needs to understand the situation as a whole and to reduce fear, cause and effects, as well as utilizing more public relations. Chair Salvatore stated that the first step in doing so is finalization of the SOP. Ms. Disney added that the committee should not wait for people to search for answers but, to be proactive and place an OP ED piece. Chair Salvatore suggested Ms. Searchfield see about an advisory study for RFQ, while Mr. Coston suggested everyone brainstorm studies and ideas, emailing thoughts to Chair Salvatore.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD (UP TO 15 MINUTES)

John Kelly stated Acadia National Park hired a social scientist who may have access to many others with experience for valid results. Mr. Coston also explained that Council is looking for statistical studies. Ms. Goldthwait mentioned that citizen's livability issue is at the center of concern.

Mr. Phippen shared there may be useful information derived from old comprehensive plans, comparing satisfaction from then and now and taking into consideration the number of cruise ships side by side with that data. A large part of the traffic is Acadia National Park tourism, not only cruise ships.

Chair Salvatore suggested reaching out to other ports and communities to find comparable studies and/or resources. Ms. Disney added that studies should incorporate how visitors and residents feel about noise and crowds. In addition, Mr. Dobbs mentioned that there is a difference between perception and reality and that all viewpoints add up to real truth. The most important question is what does that mean to all people, questioning if store owners benefit or not.

Mr. Phippen stated that there was a local satisfaction survey completed years ago and again, we should not spend money on outsourcing when it can be done in-house. Chair Salvatore added that there may not necessarily be a need to spend money. Ms. Disney commented that when studies are compared to see the change in trends of perception, we

will need to finalize who is surveyed. She also added that continued public relation plans to show emerging data will help locals see that we are addressing their frustrations.

VIII. COMMITTEE COMMENTS AND REQUESTS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Next meeting scheduled for March 12, 2020 at 1:00 PM

Future Agenda Items:

1. Final SOP and press release
2. 2020 Goals
3. Visitor impact study on Council directive

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Phippen, with second by Mr. Dobbs, moved to adjourn at 2:13 PM. Motion passed 9-0.