

Minutes
Bar Harbor Cruise Ship Committee
By Video Conference
Thursday, April 1, 2021 @ 3:00 PM

Attendance:

Chair Eben Salvatore and committee members Martha Searchfield, Eben Salvatore, Matt Hochman, Sandy McFarland, Jeremy Dougherty, Jennifer Cough, Ken Smith, Lawrence Sweet, Greg Gordon, John Kelly, Charlie Phippen, Sarah Flink, Skip Strong, Amy Powers and Liz Graves.

Police Chief Jim Willis was excused. Captain David Kerns attended to represent the department. Town Manager Cornell Knight also attended.

Jim Willis, Greg Gordon, Charlie Phippen, Sarah Flink, Skip Strong and Amy Powers are non-voting members. Liz Graves did not vote. The voting membership for the meeting was 10.

- I. CALL TO ORDER— 3:04 p.m.**

- II. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD (UP TO 15 MINUTES)—None.**

- III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES (March 4, 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 March 4, 2021 Regular Meeting minutes as presented. Roll Call Vote:

<u>Salvatore</u>	<u>Y</u>
<u>Hochman</u>	<u>Y</u>
<u>Disney</u>	<u>Y</u>
<u>McFarland</u>	<u>Y</u>
<u>Dougherty</u>	<u>Y</u>
<u>Cough</u>	<u>Y</u>
<u>Smith</u>	<u>Y</u>
<u>Sweet</u>	<u>Y</u>
<u>Kelly</u>	<u>Y</u>

Motion passed 9-0.
(Ms. Searchfield had not yet joined the meeting.)

- IV. STAFF REPORTS**

Capt. Kerns said that two supervisors in the Police Department will be taking a new Port and Vessel Security for Public Safety training course put on by FEMA.

Mr. Phippen said more cancellations have been received for 2020, including eight fall visits for Jewel of the Seas. The official schedule for 2021 is down to 85 ship visits, representing 135,886 passengers. For 2022, 146 ships are scheduled. For 2023, 88 are scheduled. No change since the last meeting for 2024 onward.

Mr. Knight gave an update on the survey being conducted by Pan Atlantic Research. The survey is at the printers and should be sent out April 7 and people should start to receive it by April 12. Mr. Salvatore said Mr. Hochman did a great job communicating the committee's feedback on the survey to the Council and some of it did get incorporated.

Mr. Smith asked if the Council has already sent the letter about the breakwater that was discussed at the last meeting of this committee. Mr. Salvatore said he hasn't yet drafted the letter to Council explaining the request and he hopes to have it ready in time for the April 20 Council meeting.

V. REGULAR BUSINESS

a. 2021 season update

Ms. Flink said that CruiseMaine is making good progress planning with the nine Maine cruise port communities to accommodate the American Cruise Lines schedule for safe operations. That company is beginning some operations with passengers in Florida, South Carolina and the lower Mississippi, which are going very well. They plan to submit their plan to the Maine Center for Disease Control in the next week or so. CruiseMaine is shooting for mid-April for its plan for shoreside plan for all nine ports. She also said the governor's recent announcement that everyone over age 16 will be eligible for vaccines beginning April 7 is a hopeful sign for tourism overall.

The public-facing cruise schedule on the maine.portcall.com statewide service, she said, has been temporarily taken down with a note that "Maine's public cruise schedule is temporarily unavailable pending CDC and state approval for potential 2021 sailings. Please contact the relevant local municipal government for more information." The internal portion of the portcall.com service used by cruise lines and harbormasters is still active.

Mr. Strong asked if Mr. Phippen could send his updated 2021 schedule. Mr. Salvatore suggested that that Bar Harbor 2021 schedule has the same caveat as the one on portcall.com—the dates listed are mostly placeholders.

Ms. Powers said there has been some recent press about the cruise industry asking the government to rescind the no-sail order, given the recent statement that the vaccine will be available for everyone. The CDC has said it's not really up to us, and there's a bit of confusion about which federal agency makes the call. Among the 400,000

passengers that have sailed since operations resumed in Europe there have been fewer than 50 cases, so it's time for the government to reassess what's happening with cruise. Travel agents, pilots, ports and unions have all been involved in this push. The industry would like to be sailing by July of this year.

b. Anchorage B update

Mr. Salvatore said he briefly communicated with Toby Stephenson at College of the Atlantic about the small aquaculture lease held by the college that overlaps slightly with the proposed new anchorage area. Mr. Phippen said he had also filled Mr. Stephenson in with what has been discussed. Mr. Stephenson didn't have any trouble with it and Mr. Phippen thinks that even if the site is within the anchorage it's a minor obstacle that we could easily overcome.

Mr. Salvatore added that COA has also discussed an alternative location for the aquaculture lease, which would be outside the new anchorage area to the north of Bar Island, when the lease is up for renewal. Mr. Stephenson wanted to know if that new location was okay with fishermen. Mr. Salvatore offered to take the proposed new location (for the lease) to the Harbor Committee along with the proposal to shift the anchorage. The committee agreed.

c. Sustainability projects

Ms. Powers presented a draft of a document called "Bar Harbor, ME – Corporate Social Responsibility of the Cruise Industry and its stakeholders." She said it would be good to take an inventory of current corporate responsibility and sustainability efforts, as well as to set goals for when we get back to business. It would be good to identify ways that the cruise industry is supporting Council goals. She suggested forming a subcommittee to work on these things.

Mr. Hochman reminded the group that the town is embarking on an update to its Comprehensive Plan and any information gathered for this would be useful in that process as well. It's a good time to start working on this.

Mr. Salvatore said we're not looking to recreate or reposition anything, but to find ways to make the experience better. Committee members could send suggestions for things to add or change in the draft document to Ms. Powers.

Ms. Powers said she's been in touch with a student, Hannah Jury, who is working on a related project. She pointed Ms. Jury to the Global Sustainable Tourism Council and the Planeterra Foundation, which was founded by a former Corporate Social Responsibility executive for Royal Caribbean.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD (UP TO 15 MINUTES)

Hannah Jury said she will be looking to connect with people individually as her project progresses. Ms. Cough also offered to talk with her.

VII. COMMITTEE COMMENTS AND REQUESTS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Cough shared that she is running for Council. Mr. Hochman said that if she is elected, she could continue serving on this committee but couldn't be an officer of it.

Dr. Disney said there used to be two Council representatives on this committee and thinks that should be revisited. She thanked Ms. Powers for her proposal and said she'd like to look for ways to direct cruise ship revenue so it serves a broader swath of residents and visitors. Even, as a radical suggestion, how can we extend our thinking about that benefit to the other towns on the bay who share the experience of the ships coming in and out? If they received some benefit it would go a long way toward there being wider acceptance of cruise ship visitation.

Ms. Powers said technically the town is charging for the use of the federal anchorage. Because the passengers are landing in Bar Harbor, that's where the burden is. She said there are grant programs available, including from the cruise lines.

Mr. Salvatore said it would be a matter of finding the project and finding the way to get it done. Ms. Powers said it is better tourism if everyone takes pride in the destination—people are proud to go to destinations that are forward-thinking and are concerned about climate and sustainability.

Dr. Disney suggested including the kayak tour companies that are based in other towns when planning excursions for cruise passengers, for example. We could think wider and farther about where tourists could go and what kinds of experiences they could have in the area.

Mr. Hochman said we are legally limited in what we can use cruise fees for. It's possible to use more of the cruise ship fund for things that we would have spent tax money on, then using that tax money for other projects, but we have to be really careful. The city of Juneau, Alaska got themselves in trouble for using cruise ship fees for unauthorized purposes.

Mr. Salvatore said it's important to remember that Bar Harbor has a much stronger relationship with the industry than most other ports. Mr. Hochman agreed that the willingness to work together has been a big positive.

Ms. Cough asked how the town determines what is and is not an acceptable use. If the town were to support creating a ferry to Winter Harbor again, that would benefit cruise passengers but also others, would that be an allowed use of cruise passenger fees?

Mr. Strong said cruise fees have been used to put more money into the ambulance service. That's a service cruise ships use, but also a good benefit to the town. Things like that are totally doable. Mr. Sweet said there are examples throughout the town budget of transfers from the Cruise Ship Fund into other areas. It's a meaningful amount of money.

Mr. McFarland said we contribute to Hancock County by providing jobs.

Hannah Jury was recognized again and asked if the committee was familiar with the 2019 report on cruise tourism and traffic congestion in Bar Harbor, and to what extent its recommendations were followed. Mr. Salvatore said the council minutes from late that year reflect the recommendations the committee made informed by that report, and which ones the Council adopted. We haven't had a chance to implement those changes yet because of Covid.

Mr. Sweet said the parking changes implemented in 2019 had an impact on traffic as well. Mr. Salvatore invited Ms. Jury to send ideas that could be worked into the sustainability document.

Ms. Powers shared a link to information about [Shore and Harbor Planning Grants](#) from the Maine Department of Marine Resources.

The next meeting was set for May 13 at 3 p.m. Agenda items to include 2021 season update, Anchorage B update, breakwater update, sustainability projects.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT— 4:01 p.m.

Liz Graves, Deputy Clerk