



# Parks and Recreation Committee Minutes

Tuesday, December 10, 2024, 12:00 p.m.  
Harrigan Centennial Hall

Members: Chair – James Poulson, Ben Hughey, Brandon Marx  
Rich Krupa, Steve Black, Katherine Prussian, Candace Rutledge  
Assembly Liaison: Kevin Mosher

## I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Poulson called the meeting to order at approximately 12:00 p.m.

## II. ROLL CALL

Present: James Poulson, Ben Hughey, Candace Rutledge, Katherine Prussian, Rich Krupa, Brandon Marx, and Steve Black

Absent: None.

Assembly Liaison: Kevin Mosher (Absent)

Staff Present: Elle Campbell, Recreation Activities Specialist, Kevin Knox, Parks and Recreation Coordinator, and Connor Dunlap, Facilities Division Supervisor

Others: None.

## III. AGENDA CHANGES

None.

## IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

### A. November 10, 2024

**Hughey moved to approve the November 10, 2024, meeting minutes. Motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.**

## V. REPORTS

Chair: None.

Members: Prussian reported that the Sitka Bike Club received an electronic version of the Mountain Bike Trails which could be added to the visitors map if/when it gets updated.

City Staff: Kevin Knox, Parks, and Recreation Coordinator provided an updates on the Parks and Recreation programs. He noted there was a permit for the 2024 season which was not on the agenda for retroactive use of the Equinox for Baranoff Warm Springs.

Assembly Liaison: None.

Other(s): Ben Hughey of Sitka Trail Works reported on restoring the blown down signage at the end of Green Lake for bikers and hikers.

## VI. PERSONS TO BE HEARD (For items OFF the agenda - Not to Exceed 3 Minutes)

None.

**VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

**VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

**B. Commercial Recreational Land Use Plan**

Knox and Ainslie explained how the Draft Land Use Plan was developed, including sources of figures and recommendations. They outlined conditions of approval, special guidance, and limits on group sizes and weekly group numbers, as specified in the plan. The community survey showed that group sizes and frequency were top priorities for Sitkan users, with groups per week being preferred for easier enforcement. They also highlighted the emphasis on increased fee schedules. Feedback was requested on the plan's structure and whether any assets require additional allocations or special guidance.

Marx asked about the \$10 per client fee for special use areas (Goddard and BWS). Ainslie explained that the fee is slightly higher than forest service fees but lower than state DNR fees, with funds going to the general fund for maintenance. Hughey asked about earmarking funds for remote area maintenance.

The group sizes at Thimbleberry were 15 for the forest service, but the proposed 7 was based on community input. Prussian expressed concern about the impact of higher fees on small businesses. Proposed group sizes for BWS and Goddard were also influenced by community feedback, favoring smaller groups at Goddard.

Ainslie agreed to clarify the fee structure in the use plan and confirmed compliance with USFS permitting. Knox reported that DNR has no group size guidelines for BWS and lacked enforcement.

Ainslie supported increasing Goddard group sizes to 6 due to 6-pack licenses. Marx recommended no exceptions for presold or grandfathered permits in special use areas. Rutledge proposed standardizing group sizes to 6 for water assets and 8 for road trails.

**Prussian move to recommend the use plan to the Assembly. Motion passed unanimously 7-0.**

**XI. PERSONS TO BE HEARD (For items on or off the agenda - (Not to Exceed 3 Minutes)**

John Dunlap, owner of Alaska Wild Coast, noted the potential negative impacts on locals, especially with the 4-person group size for Goddard Hot Springs, which may limit access for those without boats. He believes price shouldn't be a barrier to remote experiences.

Sara Hadad-Dembs from Bumble Expeditions inquired about group divisions for Thimbleberry Trails and mentioned no space for other vendors besides Bike & Hike and Bumble Expeditions.

Luke Bastian, a small boat business owner, suggests increasing group size to 6 for Goddard trips, based on typical boat capacity. He emphasized tying fees to maintenance of commercial sites.

Bridget Kauffman, Baranof Warm Springs property owner, appreciated the proposed fee schedule and group size, but stressed the high costs of maintenance. She noted some users may have multiple vessels, and the fee schedule should reflect that.

Ted Laufenberg, BPOA owner, supports the permit process but raised concerns about unpermitted charter boats. He questioned the size of the 6-person group size and urged revenues be directed to BPOA for maintenance.

Bethany Lowrance, Sitka Bike and Hike, notes their heavy use of Thimbleberry Trails, with 29 uses per week and few encounters with locals. She emphasized their stewardship of the trails.

Eleya Brown inquired about allocation for new permittees and the fee structure for multi-trail tours.

Ryan Harris, Sitka Bike and Hike, warned that limits on commercial operators may drive tourists to explore trails independently, increasing risks due to inexperience and lack of safety certification.

Blaine Anderson, Sound Sailing, supported the fee increase for BWS maintenance but emphasized the need for enforcement of regulations to prevent unpermitted yachts from dropping off large groups.

Mark Thornton, Sitka Trail Works, stressed the importance of fair use and questioned whether the focus should be on community or overall use. He suggested spreading out quotas to align with cruise ship schedules.

Rebecca Peterman, Forest Service, supports the committee's efforts and recommends streamlining processes. She questioned the group size limits and suggested time-of-day restrictions. Enforcement will rely on guides and USFS monitoring.

Jay Eury, Baranoff Warm Spring resident, advocated for more infrastructure, like additional hot tubs at Goddard, and inquired about cameras at the Baranoff Warm Springs Dock.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The next meeting would be on January 14, 2024, at noon in Harrigan Centennial Hall. Hearing no objection, Chair Poulson called the meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

Attest:  
Jess Earnshaw,  
Deputy Municipal Clerk