

## Tourism Advisory Board Meeting/ Meeting Agenda

Thursday, July 21 – 8:30 a.m.

Meeting Call to Order: Judy Heinmiller at 8:30 a.m.

**Roll Call: Present** - Judy Heinmiller, John Hunt, Juanita Lidholm, Chris Schelb, Michael Ahmuty

**Absent** - Jeff Butcher (excused), Jason Gaffney, Gregg Johnson

**Also Present** - Lori Stepansky, Dave Pahl

**Approval of** June 2009 **Minutes:** Hunt motioned to approve, Lidholm seconded; all in favor

**Public Comments:** Chair Heinmiller read a letter from Hammer Museum owner, Dave Pahl, to Manager Bolen regarding removal of alders and brush along the waterfront to improve views. Stepansky commented Manager Bolen had indicated to her a while ago he was looking in to this project but she was unaware of the status. Pahl agreed to accompany Chair Heinmiller to a meeting with Manager Bolen to discuss the issue. Pahl continued comments regarding the importance of the appearance of the town to all visitors and the need for young people to complete community hours as an option to assist with some of the Borough projects such as the alder/brush removal. Heinmiller asked board member Schelb about any knowledge he may have of the Chilkoot Indian Association project for cleaning the Fort Seward area. Schelb provided details he was aware of.

**Approval of Agenda:** Hunt motioned to approve the agenda, Schelb seconded; all in favor.

**President's Report:** Heinmiller reported other than reviewing Pahl's letter to the manager, she would like the board to send a letter of thanks to the Borough Manager and the Assembly for the temporary bathroom structure. Heinmiller noted she would write the letter unless anyone present opposed. Heinmiller also noted concerns about the temporary bathroom in light of the recent rash of vandalism in town.

**New Business:** **Letter of Support for Dave Pahl** (*At last month's meeting, board member Hunt had requested a letter of recognition for Hammer Museum owner, Dave Pahl. It was decided invite Dave Pahl to the meeting to learn more about his tourism issues and interests in order to provide specific support.*)

Hunt commented Dave Pahl was denied non-profit status for the Hammer Museum. Pahl stated the denial was in regards to property tax exempt status. He also commented the state statutes indicated buildings being used by non-profits qualify for property tax exemption. Discussion followed regarding tax exempt status in relation to non-profit organizations and whether the board could offer any support for the Hammer Museum situation. Pahl commented the property tax exemption would allow building improvements to be made to the museum building resulting in an increase of property tax should the museum ever move to another location. Heinmiller asked Hunt to write a letter of support for Dave Pahl and all non-profits in the Haines for their contribution to the community and the visitor industry.

**Old Business: Bathroom/Pavilion Project**

Public feedback regarding the cost and location of the Bathroom/Pavilion Waterfront project was discussed including recent letters to the editor in the local newspaper. Writing a letter to the editor to state the board's position on this and other tourism issues was suggested by Heinmiller. All agreed to send a letter to the editor and if not published, to possibly opt for a paid commentary. Stepansky recommended touching base with the Borough Clerk, Julie Cozzi, before writing and submitting a letter to ensure following procedure. Ahmuty suggested any letter would be best written with a helpful tone of assisting to educate by directing people to where they can find information about postings of public meetings and agenda items in order to learn about issues of the Borough. Heinmiller will meet with the Borough Clerk regarding writing a letter or paid commentary and set up a meeting with Stepansky about the letter if approved to do so.

***Head Tax Recommendation List (Board member Butcher has acquired information regarding unspent funds of the cruise ship head tax and would like to begin discussions and/or set up special meeting to discuss recommendations to the assembly for these funds.)***

Stepansky commented on her conversation with board member Butcher about the unused funds and reviewed the board's discussion at the last meeting regarding the topic. Stepansky's review included the board agreeing to either set up a special meeting or a few board members getting together to begin a list for the board to recommend to the assembly regarding how to use these head tax funds for this year and years to follow. Hunt commented it had also been discussed to create a prioritized list. Item was tabled till next meeting where ideas to start a list would begin unless it was decided to have a special meeting on the subject prior.

**Directors Update: Travel writers**

Stepansky reported there had been some travel writers through Haines and additional travel media have been scheduled for this year. She also reported on FAM (familiarization) trips being arranged for groups from Australia and Japan. Stepansky also noted travel writers and FAMs from Australia which were direct results of meetings she had while on the trade mission with ATIA in November. She also commented on the value of Alaska Media Roadshow with two recent travel writers having been media appointments at the event last October.

**Tourism Economic Summit**

Stepansky reported the Tourism Economic Summit was being held in Juneau this Friday and she would be attending the event with the Mayor. Stepansky noted the purpose of the event was for businesses in the Southeast Alaska to discuss concerns about the economy and impacts on tourism with industry officials.

**Director Travels**

Stepansky reported she would be attending the WACVB CEO Conference in August. She also reported on the travels coming up in October and her plans to

have Visitor Center staff person, Angie Robinson, attend one or all of these October trips for education purposes as well as assistance. Stepansky noted it wasn't specifically budgeted but felt it could be absorbed in the current budget but may call upon the board for support in the future.

### **Community Issues**

Stepansky took time to comment on her concerns regarding animosity she see's developing between the Borough government and the community and asked the board members to assist in changing the tone when in conversations with local people. Stepansky stated she knew there were issues frustrating to everyone but disrespectful, angry, hateful behavior was not condoning to productivity nor solving problems. She also commented about being on the receiving end of hostile and insulting comments referring to recent, specific examples. Stepansky stated that although there may be a few employees in the Borough not performing to their maximum, the overall majority were doing their best and working very hard. She stated kind words went a long way and insults produce negative results noting there are considerate, calm ways to discuss concerns and problems. Stepansky noted to the board that Borough employees were human beings, respectful approaches accomplished more, and asked them all to keep this in mind and pass along when interacting with community members.

**Board Comments:** N/A

**Set Next Meeting Date:** Tuesday, August 18, 2009 – 8:30 a.m.  
**Assembly Chambers, Public Safety Building**

**Meeting Adjournment:** Hunt motioned to adjourn, Schelb seconded; all approved.  
Meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.