

CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

RESOLUTION NO. 2021-05

A RESOLUTION BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA URGING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO ISSUE A TEMPORARY WAIVER TO THE PASSENGER VESSEL SERVICES ACT AND ASKING THE CDC TO ISSUE TECHNICAL GUIDANCE TO ALLOW CRUISE LINES TO RESUME OPERATIONS IN ALASKA IN 2021

WHEREAS, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sitka, along with communities throughout Alaska, the State of Alaska and Federal government have implemented historic measures to address the pandemic, including robust contact tracing, widely available free COVID-19 testing, and community mitigation strategies; and

WHEREAS, as of February 16, 2021, Sitka remains in a low risk zone as well as continuing an aggressive and effective vaccination program with one of the most successful completion rates in the State of Alaska. The community has maintained lower COVID-19 rates compared to other parts of Alaska and the country in large part due to the COVID-19 mitigation efforts in place and vaccination efforts are now in full force; and

WHEREAS, the community has simultaneously suffered massive social and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic from lost classroom time to the shuttering of local businesses and decreased municipal revenues that are used to provide critical services; and

WHEREAS, Sitka's cruise ship industry, has sustained substantial losses with the entire 2020 cruise ship season cancelled; and

WHEREAS, more than 2,260,000 visitors traveled to the state in 2019; and

WHEREAS, in 2019 approximately 1,331,600 people visited the state by cruise ship accounting for 90% of the visitors to Southeast Alaska; and

WHEREAS, 300,000 passengers were projected to visit Sitka during the cancelled season and the resulting economic loss is estimated at \$106 million; and

WHEREAS, each year the tourism industry generates more than \$2 million in state and municipal revenue and more than \$1.4 billion in payroll and \$2.2 billion of visitors spending; and

WHEREAS, on February 4, 2021, the Canadian Minister of Transport announced two interim orders, which ban cruise vessels in all Canadian waters until February 28, 2022; and

WHEREAS, the announcement would effectively cancel the large ship Alaska cruise season for 2021 creating further stress for the Sitka economy; and

WHEREAS, additionally, the cruise industry is awaiting Centers for Disease Control technical guidance for resuming operations; and

WHEREAS, local governments, through the Emergency Operations Center, are prepared to work collaboratively with cruise lines to develop local COVID-19 mitigation plans for the industry to safely resume in Sitka; and

WHEREAS, in acknowledgement of these historic events, the Federal government is able to issue a temporary waiver of the Passenger Vessel Services Act, allowing foreign flagged vessels to bypass Canada during its ban and visit Alaska to deliver much needed economic relief.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA, ALASKA:


Section 1. The Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka, along with communities throughout Southeast Alaska, urge the Federal government to issue a temporary waiver to the Passenger Vessel Services Act to allow the Alaska cruise industry to resume operations in 2021.

Section 2. The Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka request that the CDC issue technical guidance to allow the cruise lines to resume operations in the coming months.

Section 3. The City and Borough Clerk shall transmit a copy of this resolution to Alaska Congressman Don Young, Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski, Alaska Senator Dan Sullivan, and Governor Mike Dunleavy.


Section 4. Effective Date. This resolution shall be effective immediately after its adoption.

SIGNED in Sitka, Alaska this 23rd day of February, 2021.



Steven Eisenbeisz, Mayor

ATTEST:



Sara Peterson, MMC
Municipal Clerk

1st and final reading 02/23/2021

Sponsors: Knox / Eisenbeisz / Mosher