



Project Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Project Name: Waterfront and Economic Development Plan **Meeting No:** 02
Project No.: WHI-24-01 **Date:** 12/12/2024
Prepared By: Linda Pringle **Time:** 7:00 pm

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Discussion:

Item Topic

1.0 Review Economic Assessment

Charlie Howard: not too much to add, a lot of great information

Heather Brazelton: way more detailed than I thought it would be, not convinced that all of the information is necessary for everyone. New resident, only been in the area for a couple of years. Numbers, population, income, seem odd to her, but not an expert in the area.

Owen Ala: City of Whittier tax revenue seems like a low number (team will confirm). It would be nice to see a combined datasheet of the total revenue the City receives and of that portion, what is available for development. This would help to confirm what the bottom line is. Concise graph or couple of graphs that tell the whole story: summary of City income, expenditures, etc. Understand that there isn't a big tax revenue base and there are a lot of user groups across Whittier that use Whittier – creative ways of revenue streams to propel development.

Tim Alderson: HOB has added significant addition to tax revenue from this cruise ship dock. This general fund finances are going to be the mechanism to fund most of these products, how much is there, what can you support as far as debt load, this is important.

- Data doesn't necessarily capture what a unique place Whittier is. Seasonality, most of the town in one building, etc.
- Most of the taxes, lease rates, moorage rates, is below market value, but the economic data of the people that live in Whittier is lower than average. How do you preserve access to a population in Whittier that has fairly low income, when there is the opportunity to charge more for moorage, leases, raise property taxes. What would this do to the people who live here year-round?

Kris Erchinger: Passenger Tax Business Tax, businesses pay a per person passenger fee, but they do not pay sales tax.



- Don't have the tax income from the new cruise ship dock rolled into numbers yet. There is a three year economic development incentive for property tax given to developing economic projects, numbers won't roll into Whittier's financials for at least three years.
- Lease revenues: 80% of the land in Whittier is government owned whether it is State of Alaska or the Alaska Railroad Corporation, which is not taxable (tax exempt). The only property tax received by Whittier is the vessels in the harbor, BTI, residential properties (approximately less than 15 city lots), etc. Big issue that there isn't a lot of taxable land. HOB facility is on City-owned tide lands and railroad owned uplands, but it will add to bottom line of property values after the three years.

Meagan: not a lot to add.

Aubrey: Echo Heather's thoughts for the census data for Whittier, such a small community. Don't believe that the data represents Whittier very well.

Scott Korbe: I did not see in the 2 reports that the MOU requires the city to pay the railroad 40% of the gross Rev. on MOU land.

2.0 Review Inventory and Assessment

Charlie Howard: thought was fairly well done, definitely one area that I would add information is the Smitty's Cove area. A lot of different user groups that use this area and increases every year. Business is glacier jet ski adventures, have a railroad lease in the area. Fisherman can go and load nets, smaller people with zodiacs that need to be assembled and the main harbor isn't the best place for them, a lot of this use. Maintain access for everyone there, whether it is people launching the boats and the community using the area and the nice beach. Works well with a lot of different user groups as long as no one takes ownership and everyone is able to share. Taking into consideration all of the users in this area. Whatever they can do to promote that in the future would be great.

Heather Brazelton: Agree with Smitty's Cove, unofficial swim club meets down there every week, a lot of local activity. Through parks and recreation, night or evening people meet and hang out on the beach, have a fire, and swim.

Owen: Not a lot to add, very helpful.

Tim: Informative, couple of things.

- Under opportunities – launch ramp and parking area at the HOB, lots of land and solves problems, but a lot of days you couldn't launch boats there.
- Condition of the title grid – it is in a horrible spot, not safe at the end of the ramp. Is in the worst possible spot it could be with tons of boat traffic in both directions and is a major safety concern. Grid sits under water, right where the launch ramp is. Could not be in a worse spot.
- Strong desire from people to have a viable pump out station. All of them are in noncompliance with marine sanitation laws, not practical to go to the three mile limit to pump out. Wish list, useful and well-developed pump out station.
- Soul searching that needs to be done about what Whittier wants to be, do you want to be a cruise ship mecca? What does this mean and what doesn't it mean.
- No discussion of emergency preparedness, this is interesting because of the tunnel and more and more cruise ships. Having contingencies to do with mass casualties, landslides, earthquakes. People coming through tunnel and there is an event, how do you build infrastructure and strategies to deal with this.

Meagan: two explosions in the past five years, large dock, propane leak on a boat with an explosion, fuel dock exploded on Fourth of July. Not a lot of stuff mentioned about this. Harbor reconstruction – there is one ramp to get down to the harbor, used to have two access points to get down to the harbor. What could happen if you are trying to get down to the dock with one gangway. Happy to see it



mentioned that garbage situation needs to be addressed. Security issues and concerns about people late at night. Fishing gear stolen.

Aubrey: Considering other users, important to consider what Whittier can be to fill the needs in the communities that use it and live there.

3.0 Public Engagement Schedule

- Public Mtg #1 (Virtual): Evening Work Session – January 7/8 @ 6:30 pm
 - Review the Economic Assessment and Inventory and Assessment Documents with the public.
 - Facilitated exercises to develop the community’s vision, goals, and objectives for the waterfront.
 - Follow-up PAC Mtg: January 9 @ 7 pm.
- Public Mtg #2 (In-Person): Public Open House – January 15 (ANC) & 16 (WHI) @ 5 – 7 pm.
 - Open forum where people can come and review the DRAFT Vision, Goals, and Objectives and the DRAFT Proposed Waterfront Projects, discuss options with the team, and provide their feedback or ask questions.
 - Follow-up PAC Mtg: January 16 @ 7:30 pm.
- 45-day Review Period for DRAFT WEDP – May 5 – June 19
- Public Mtg #3: Public Information Meeting – Beginning of May (Date TBD).

End of Meeting