


**b.** Introduction and Update on Port Communities of Alaska Association

TRANSMITTAL MEMORANDUM

7b

TO: The Honorable Mayor & City Council Initials:   
FROM: Lacey G. Simpson, Assistant City Manager File #: MGR24-567  
DATE: September 12, 2024 Mtg. #: 09/19/24 NBb  
RE: **Introduction and Update on Port Communities of Alaska Association**

As the City Council may recall, beginning in 2019, City staff began participating in informal discussions with the managers of fellow Southeast Alaska Port communities to discuss topics of mutual interest regarding cruise tourism. In more recent years, the group has met more regularly and has now formalized itself as the Port Communities of Alaska Association (PCOA) with assistance and advocacy provided by the Alaska Municipal League. The PCOA has adopted a set of bylaws and meets monthly to discuss and collaborate on common issues and initiatives. Membership by participating communities is currently being finalized and also expanded to include smaller and developing cruise port communities.

City of Ketchikan Tourism Manager Laurie Booyse and City and Borough of Juneau Visitor Industry Director (formerly Tourism Manager) Alix Pierce will provide an introductory overview presentation to the City Council on the Port Communities of Alaska Association activities and structure at the meeting of September 19, 2024. Ms. Pierce serves as the Chair of the PCOA and Ms. Booyse has been regularly participating in these meetings since her appointment to Tourism Manager and serves as Secretary. Attached for City Council review is summary information on PCOA provided by Ms. Pierce in advance of the presentation.



## **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Ketchikan City Council

**From:** Alexandra Pierce, City and Borough of Juneau Visitor Industry Director and Chair, Port Communities of Alaska

**Subject:** Port Communities of Alaska Summary

Port Communities of Alaska (PCOA) started in 2020 as a series of informal meetings of municipal staff in Southeast Alaska regarding interruptions to tourism during the pandemic, the resulting requirements for port agreements, and challenges with re-starting the industry. The initial group included City Managers and tourism staff in Ketchikan, Juneau, Sitka, Hoonah, and Skagway. Those involved quickly discovered immense value in collaboration and information sharing. As we recovered from the pandemic, the group continued meeting and discussed formalizing the organization to be able to advocate as a single voice, hold common contracts, and support smaller communities struggling with their future as cruise tourism destinations.

In July, PCOA formally organized under the Alaska Municipal League (AML) as an association of municipal employees, similar to AML's associations of City Managers or City Clerks. The members are employees in tourism-related roles. Currently, PCOA has two officers. Ketchikan Tourism Manager Laurie Booyse is serving as Secretary and Juneau Visitor Industry Director Alexandra Pierce is Chair. The group is meeting on September 23 to elect officers and discuss organization and a dues structure.

To launch the group and secure administrative support from AML, several municipalities put up an initial investment of \$5,000 each. The goal of the meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> is to discuss how dues will be collected and administered and set goals for the organization. Alaska is a late adopter of the regional port organization concept. There are models throughout the world, and members are currently reviewing examples of different dues structures with a goal of ensuring that communities pay an amount proportional to visitation or community size.

One of the early stated goals of PCOA is to engage in region-wide strategic planning. Ports like Juneau and Sitka are working to establish limits and publicly expressing that they do not have room to grow. This affects other ports in the region. It is important that these efforts, including public outreach and communications with the industry, are coordinated and that Alaskan ports work together to support a sustainable tourism industry in the region for the coming decades.