



MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON CRUISE SHIP COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Monday, September 10, 2007

2:00 PM

City Hall, City Manager's Conference Room

Present: City Councilor Ken Smith, Donald, Coker, NH Division of Ports and Harbors Director Geno Marconi, PJ Johnson, Robin Whitaker, City Manager John Bohenko, Economic Development Program Manager Nancy Carmer, ex-officio.

The first order of business was to elect a committee chair. Mr. Marconi nominated Councilor Smith. Motion seconded by Donald Coker. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Smith said the charge of the committee is to answer three questions:

- 1) What is the feasibility of bringing cruise ships to Portsmouth?
- 2) If feasible, where will they dock?
- 3) Who will be responsible for marketing Portsmouth to cruise lines?

Committee will sunset by December 1, 2007. Nancy Carmer will be the City Manager's ex-officio representative to the Committee. Meetings will be posted and minutes recorded and posted. Meetings will be held either at the Port Authority or at City Hall. Consensus was that 7:30 am is the best time to meet. Frequency of meetings will be dependent on findings of committee.

Discussion on Question 1: Feasibility of bringing cruise ships to Portsmouth.

Mr. Marconi shared correspondence he has had regarding Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines. Their ships have too deep of a draft for the Piscataqua River and ship length is problematic for dockage.

Mr. Johnson presented his research about what cruise lines are trading. Currently there are about 12 passenger vessels trading in the market. Given the limitations imposed by the Piscataqua River tides and turning basin, by the height of the lift bridges, and the depth of the river only 10% of these can port here in Portsmouth. The larger the vessel, the less likely it is we can be accommodated in Portsmouth Harbor.

Anchorage offshore with a 4.5- mile tender trip is a possibility, but open anchorages in rough seas makes it less attractive to cruise lines. The Coast Guard station in the lower harbor is probably not a feasible spot to dock cruise vessels.

Another factor that should be considered is the fact that typically many cruise ship passengers that disembark in port are put on buses for excursions out of the city, thereby minimizing the local economic impact of the visit. Finally, the schedule that cruise lines like to adhere to is early arrival in port and late afternoon departure. Local tides do not often match this preference.

Mr. Marconi shared another email correspondence regarding the American Canadian Cruise Line (ACCL). This organization which has several classes of ships that could be accommodated in Portsmouth and the company has shown interest in visiting Portsmouth. These ships carry ~100 passengers with 62% customer repeat business. For these vessels there is not an issue with origination or customs.

Another line that could potentially be accommodated in Portsmouth is the Seaborne line. However, they have casinos onboard which are currently precluded by NH state laws.

Ms. Whitaker asked what purpose is driving the cruise ship feasibility analysis. Is it economic development and spin-off business to the local retail, restaurant and supply industry? If so, the tall ships clearly met that purpose. Why not focus on that industry? She said that the committee should also consider the revenue stream for cruise ship dockage and fuel that would be generated by marketing Portsmouth to these lines. Mr. Coker contributed that a Halifax study of tall ship visitors indicated that individuals spend an average of \$46 per person in the community hosting the ships.

Mr. Bohenko said Ms. Whitaker raised valid points; the tall ships were great for the city. But if there are even four or five cruise ships that are suitable and would be interested in Portsmouth perhaps a trial partnership could be established between the Chamber of Commerce, the City and the Downtown Business Association to arrange city tour and meal packages and market that the cruise companies to avoid excursions out of the city.

The question of a potential conflict between the existing container business and cruise ship dockage was asked. Mr. Marconi did not think there was a conflict for smaller cruise vessels. As Port Director, he believes Portsmouth should pursue small cruise ships. Mr. Coker added that once a tall ship or a cruise ship discovers the hospitality and the terrific destination that Portsmouth is they speak to others in the industry and the word of mouth generates additional business.

Mr. Smith noted that the discussion would be continued at the next meeting on September 26th at 7:30 am at the Port Authority Conference Room.

Meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy M. Carmer

Approved 9/26/07

Economic Development Program Manager

Approved 9/26/07