
President and CEO Report: October 2022

International Visitors Leadership Program a huge success

We had an amazing opportunity at the beginning of the month to host a group of visitor industry delegates from Finland, Norway and Greenland as part of the State department's [International Visitors Leadership Program \(IVLP\)](#). The group was here to learn about our efforts in sustainable and Arctic tourism and collaborations with indigenous cultures. The two days of engagement and conversations included a variety of partners and stakeholders, to include Northern Alaska Tour Company, Doyon Limited, UA Museum of the North, Running Reindeer Ranch, and the World Eskimo Indian Olympics. See attached for feedback from the Department of State coordinators. Also see attached for a panel discussion on 10/26 with Mayor Ward on the Arctic Circle Assembly that he just attended in Iceland.

2023 ATIA Convention theme unveiled in Sitka

At the ATIA convention in Sitka, we unveiled the theme of next year's convention, "Aurora Night Live", which will be held October 23-27. This will be an "all hands on deck" for the regional visitor industry



to pull off; more information to come. One of the best parts of convention, in my mind, was when we had a chance to break out into regions to talk about issues specific to us; was great engaging with Interior Alaska colleagues we normally don't get a chance to interact with.

Results of local elections and how the candidates responded if they supported their government's current bed tax ordinance:

City of Fairbanks: Do you support the current City of Fairbanks hotel/motel bed tax ordinance that was passed in 2003? Why or why not?

- **David Pruhs, City of Fairbanks Mayor:** I do not feel that the Bed Tax should be raised from its current 8%. While on the Fairbanks City Council, every time the bed tax was discussed as a new source of revenue, I opposed it. Fortunately, wiser heads prevailed and the last attempt to raise the bed tax to pay for private security downtown failed. I will VETO any attempt to raise the Bed Tax or Change the allocation the City of Fairbanks receives.

- **Sue Sprinkle, City Council Seat C:** Yes. Collecting money from the same people who are staying in our City to visit the entities supported by the bed tax seems like a win/win. In addition, promoting our City to the Outside with help from City funds is a great service. What I have heard discussed is that these numbers haven't changed with inflation. I think that's a discussion that will have to be had with the City.
- **Crystal Tidwell, City Council Seat D:** Yes. Having funding to reinvest in our community & market tourism is essential to our local economy.

FNSB Assembly: Do you support the current FNSB hotel/motel bed tax distribution formula that has been in place since 2004? Why or why not?

- **Brett Rotermund, FNSB Assembly Seat B:** As I understand it right now, my answer is yes. It seems to be working as is, so why fix it. If there are issues in the future and I am elected, I can honestly say I will look at the issue with an open mind because I really don't have any skin in the game with the industry.
- **Mindy O'Neall, FNSB Assembly Seat C:** I think the tax distribution for government services that are most commonly used by visitors in our community (Pioneer Park, transportation, roads as examples) should be included as the visitor industry uses these services. As Golden Heart Plaza is the icon of Fairbanks, the industry could consider supporting a small bed tax increase to help support non-carceral services for our unhoused community members and for mental health. As it stands now, the formula seems to be working for those organizations who benefit from it, and as an overall benefit to the community. The amount of the tax collection and distribution becomes worth less with the rise in inflation.
- **Barbra Haney, FNSB Assembly Seat I:** I think what has been in place is working for the industry at the present time, but I would be open to listening to the industry for ways to improve those expenditures.

North Pole City Council: Do you support a change in the City of North Pole bed tax ordinance in order to ensure reinvestment of funds through a budget line item for destination marketing programs of Explore Fairbanks similar to the City of Fairbanks' and the Fairbanks North Star Borough's reinvestment? Why or why not?

- **Chandra Clack:** Everyone has been effected by the inflation the we are experiencing currently, I believe that reviewing the budget there may be a possibility of decreasing the bad tax ordinance.
- **Jeff Jacobson:** I support constructive dialogue about funding sources, budgets, sustainability, enhanced service, timelines etc. In other a strategic plan that would address immediate needs and goals, near term needs and goals and long range needs and goals.