

# GREATER WHITTIER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## 03/12/14

**ATTENDING:** Rebecca Langton, Fee's Custom Seafoods; Margaret Varlamos, Swiftwater; Eric Downey, AWRTA; Gary S., PCT; Susan Fouse, 907 Tours; Bob Neumann, Phillips Cruises and Tours; Jessica Pezak, Alyeska Resort; Kelly Bender, Lazy Otter; Scott, Alaska Wildlife CC; Tim Melican, Magic Bus; Linda Brandon, Major Marine Tours; Steve Judd, Alaska Tour and Travel; Jacob, Premier Alaska Tours; Mardee McEntire, Holland America/Princess; Candice McDonald and Mandy Garcia, Salmon Berry Tours; Andy Morrison, Girdwood Chamber; Charlie and Athena Grimm, BAC Trans.

**CALL TO ORDER:** 12:09

**PRESIDENTS REPORT:** Even though the map is already printed this year, there are still memberships available. The map is distributed through the tunnel booths, ATIA, other Chambers, local businesses and the Sportsman Shows. We are signing up for the Sportsman Shows right now. It's a wonderful way to show off Whittier, the fun we have here and your business. Contact Rebecca for times available.

This meeting is all about the PTBT, Passenger Transportation Business Tax. Because most of city council members do not know how or where this tax came from, we want a consolidated message to be brought to the council meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

When it was started, the tax was \$1.25 every time a passenger got on AND off a bus or boat. This does not include the cruise ships; they have the CVP tax that negates the PTBT. It was then raised to \$2.50, although website STILL says \$1.25. Not everyone was charged the same, nor was it enforced equally to all transportation services.

Previous City Mngrs. were trying very hard to get compliant with the ordinance by sending letters out regarding this and back tax being owed, but there were several businesses that had not heard of nor had collected said tax from previous passengers.

At the last City Council special meeting, City Mngr. Tom Bolin's contract was not renewed. During a brief meeting with the council, it was recognized that this was not being handled by the Council it was being handled by the City Mngr and Executive Assistant.

**QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/CONCERNS:**

**SEWARD**

**WHITTIER**

No business license required	\$50 business license
No sales tax charged on transport sold outside of SWD	PTBT enforced no matter where sale originated
About \$90 in additional fuel for bus WHT to SWD	Tunnel fee \$125 for bus
Harbor user fee for tour/charter boat \$3.50	PTBT for tour/charter boat \$2.50 EACH way
	Harbor user fee per person \$1.00

- Biggest concern seems to be fairness; busses, boats, railroad, ships. Will be difficult due to taxes already in place (sales tax, CVP). This tax will discourage business.
- CVP must directly improve cruise ship passenger amenities.
- Isn't this double dipping?
- We are loosing business to Seward across the board; day tours, restaurants, fishing.
- The paperwork is terribly hard and time consuming. Businesses have dropped Whittier from their tour options.
- NCL will not be back in 2015 (this is the ship that passengers had time to spend in Whittier)
- Just plain easier to go to Seward; no counting people, easier paperwork, less expense.
- Hears agents on the phone trying to explain the taxes and it sounds very negative. Busses are at a disadvantage to ARR because they don't pay at all. The PBTB needs to be taken away. Businesses look at Whittier every year whether they should drop Whittier from their schedules.
- City Mngr. Tom Bolin had been looking into the requirement of Whittier business licenses if the business originates in another city.
- This needs to be made very simple. Yes it brings in money, but the city will see that this whole thing needs to be reviewed due to the loss of over all business. Be fair to passengers. This will bring more business, which brings more money.
- Do taxis have to pay this?
- Are there numbers anywhere to show these taxes and where the monies are going?
- Because SOME have received legal letters and started to pay, the city WILL go after others. This needs to be rewritten.
- Some are afraid if Whittier wins this, it will be a building block for other cities and towns to add this tax and other taxes.

PLEASE TAKE A MINUTE TO WRITE SPECIFIC, CONSISE LETTERS SHOWING THE EFFECT THIS TAX IS HAVING ON YOUR BUSINESS IN WHITTIER. EMAIL THEM TO KELLY BY FRIDAY 3/14. THESE WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE CITY COUNCIL AT THE 3/18 MEETING AT 7PM IN WHITTIER.

PLEASE CONTACT REBECCA TO SIGN UP FOR TIME SLOTS AT THE SPORTSMAN SHOWS FOR 3/21-23 AND 3/27-30.