



Seldovia Gazette

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Letters to the Editor

Port Fee . . .

Dear Seldovia City Council Members,

"Additions for Sundry Fee Schedule include a Port Fee for all disembarking passengers of \$3.50 for all commercial vessels providing transportation. A Transient Moorage day use fee of \$5 will be assessed for all vessels in the small boat harbor. This fee will be \$10 on Independence Day. Reference to the first four hours of moorage being free has now been omitted."

If this is an accurate statement of the recently passed "Port Fee" I can sum up my reaction in a single word.

Insanity!!!!

In earlier discussions with the tour boat skippers on this subject I believe their response was, "There's no real reason to stop in Seldovia." They can tour the harbor and then go fishing or simply by-pass Seldovia.

"all commercial vessels"

Tour boats?

Ferry?

Charter fishing boats?

Are returning Seldovia residents charged the fee or just "outsiders"?

Who decides?

If it does apply, that's a new tax on our citizens without public hearings.

How is it collected?

Who collects it?

Who covers the new administrative costs of collection and transfer of the money to

Port Fee . . .

To the Seldovia City Council;

I read with distress that the council passed a change in the Sundry Fee Schedule for FY 2008 implementing a new \$3.50 "head tax" (fee) for all arriving visitors via commercial boats to our Small Boat Harbor. I am 100% opposed to this new fee. This is the wrong fee at the wrong time.

I know only too well the difficulties the City is having in terms of finances. But to implement such a fee is not the answer. This fee will have a very negative affect on our visitor economy. This is not just my opinion as I have had lengthy discussions with one of the biggest tour operators bringing visitors to Seldovia. He is concerned that the numbers of visitors will be significantly reduced as a result of this new fee. He went on to state that the discretionary income of people in general (as we all know) has been reduced and adding this fee will only make matters worse. Some people may say "Good, we do not like tourists anyway". This attitude is NOT representative of the majority of people that call Seldovia home; it is also very short sighted. Like it or not, the visitor economy is one of the most important economies in Seldovia. And contrary to some myths, the City does not subsidize this economy. I can say this with certainty, as I know what my business contributes to the economy of Seldovia just in terms of Sales Tax collections. In discussions with some other businesses in town that have a heavy visitor trade, I hear the same story. The sales tax collected by businesses goes directly into the city's coffers. Without the visitor trade or with a drastic reduction in the visitor trade, the sales tax receipts would drop significantly, some would say devastatingly. There are many other revenue sources besides sales tax collections that the visitor economy brings to Seldovia. Some of these other sources are very transparent, some are more discreet. Bottom line is that the visitor economy supports itself and in fact contributes significantly to the welfare of Seldovia and directly to the city's finances.

Instead of "shooting" one of the few things that is working for Seldovia (the visitor economy) I would suggest that the Council,

Seldovia?

We donate boat transportation to and from Seldovia for the Chainsaw Carvers and the Solstice Musicians - does it apply to us? If not why not? We're taking business away from the commercial operators and I believe they'd have a strong case. Strong enough that a complaint would be enough to cause me to withdraw that support because I would agree with them.

I believe there needs to be a great deal more public discussion and debate before this is put to a Council vote and enacted.


Mike Webber
Seldovia

with the businesses (to include representatives from the two major tour boat operators that bring visitors to Seldovia on a daily basis), sit down and look for ways to increase the revenue to the city without punishing those that bring the revenue and create the revenue. I am sure there are other ways to accomplish the same purpose of increasing city revenues.

I would have a totally different opinion if Seldovia were in a situation where we needed to look for ways to cut down on the number of people visiting our town due to over exposure. We are not in this position, and we are a long way from being in this position. Possibly in the future we may be, and in that case a regressive tax such as the one passed may work. But this fee at this time will only serve to deepen the financial problems of Seldovia, not to mention it will significantly hurt the number of businesses that rely on the visitor trade. I have looked at my books and while my business does have local trade (and we very much appreciate the local trade and the local trade is very important to us) a full 80% of my business revenue comes from the visitor trade.

If the purpose of this new fee is to significantly lower the number of visitors that come to Seldovia, then I am sure the fee will serve its purpose. If the fee is implemented and there is no decrease in visitors, I will be the first to admit that I was wrong; however, I fear that I am not. Please reconsider this very regressive, self-destructive fee. Let's not shoot one of the few things that are working for Seldovia.

Kurt Reynertson
Herring Bay Mercantile

(Click on button below)	<p>Special Interest Forum: From time to time, topics of discussion will come up that are not a good fit for the Letters to the Editor section . . . usually due to things like the length of the letters or the need to post responses sooner than once a week on Thursday. Click the "Forum" button to enter this section. If you have a topic that you would like started, please let us know.</p>
	<p>No Forum Currently Running</p>

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