



Seldovia Gazette

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Letters to the Editor

Port Fee . . .

Letter to the Editor

This is written in response to the question of whether or not the City of Seldovia should or should not establish a head tax on all of the visitors coming into the City. And, although we are now ex-patriots, we are NOT now, nor have we ever been in favor of the City Council enacting such a counter productive ordinance – EVER!!

The audacity to compare the small city of Seldovia with Juneau or other larger cities is ludicrous. Seldovia is an off-the-beaten path little village. Not a city with huge cruise ships coming and going all summer long. Its tax base is amazingly small in comparison, which we realize is the problem to begin with. But to impose a tax on the one thing that brings revenue to the city is non-productive and regressive.

As former owners of a small business in Seldovia, and a former City Council member, I feel I am more than able to address this problem. Everett and I once owned and ran a small ice cream shop and laundromat and are well aware of the problems associated with the dirth or lack of tourism in Seldovia. Every year we hoped the prices of gasoline, or whatever the new worry of the year was, wouldn't keep the people from arriving on the boats coming from Homer. Sadly to say, the local economy was NEVER enough to keep us open. We, as well as so many of the other small businesses definitely depended upon the tourists! It's interesting that each year the Seldovia Chamber of Commerce publishes a widely distributed and read "Summer Visitor" touting a welcome visit. Where in those pages are you going to ask, "By the way we're going to charge you \$3.50 for the privilege"?

To add this additional tax on the few people that come to visit Seldovia is inevitably going to be a death sentence to many of the small businesses. Check the records and find out how many businesses have folded their doors. We think that would be an eye opener to many of the council members.

Summer Solstice Music Festival. . .

Dear Editor,

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all of the people who helped make the Seldovia Summer Solstice Music Festival one of the finest yet. The marvelous musical synergy that took place at this year's festival was due to the marvelous performers, both professional and local, the hundreds of man/woman hours put into the organizational details by the Seldovia Arts Council, Seldovia Volunteers, the media and to those who donated from their hearts to make the event financially and physically possible. The event was absolutely fabulous!!

Sincerely,
Susan J. Mumma
Seldovia Summer Solstice Music Festival Director
For the Seldovia Arts Council

Port Fee . . .

Dear Editor,

I'm writing about the recently enacted Port Fee or "head tax" for visitors which I believe ill advised. By making the commercial marine operators Seldovia City tax collectors these operators will have to add the tax fee to their cost of services, so tickets on the two tour boats will be raised by the amount of the Council's head tax. Commercial fishing guides will also apparently have to add these costs as will water taxi's and, potentially, boat or kayak rental companies. This unilateral cost increase in ticket price will be accompanied by and unseen but more costly burden on these businesses. Sorting out how many times this poorly thought out tax will be collected on one person's travel to and around Seldovia, may prove to be a bit of an overhead for the City.

If the council institutes this tax, the few boats that DO come into Seldovia and bring tourists, will eventually bypass the port in favor of some other activity that doesn't have or require an additional tax. It's not fair to Seldovia! I hope that the City Council will let this issue die the death that it deserves and, further that it will NOT allow it to become a devisive issue again.

Thank you for letting us vent. We hope that some sense will come of this.

Peggy Boscacci

How will the Tour operator know if the guest goes out on a fishing guide's boat and there is potential for double taxation? If the guest uses a water taxi to come to Seldovia who pays the tax in that visitor's fees and then flies to Homer for the evening and back on the Rainbow the next morning will they pay again? If any Seldovian goes back and forth with family several times a year on the tour boats, water taxis, or fishing guides will they be equipped with a "I've paid my Seldovia City head tax" card? Each trip out on a commercial fishing guide's boat involves a "disembarking" at the Harbor so, as written, it seems this new tax will add substantially to the guide's fees where the guest would pay for each additional time they stepped onto the dock in the Harbor.


Collecting, administering and transferring tax revenues cost the merchant who is forced to be the point of collection to bear those costs unless a set aside is provided for each point of collection. The Seldovia City Council may be empowered to create this level of burdensome infrastructure but isn't the merchant being coerced into contributing the accounting costs, bank accounts, management and handling efforts where the value of this effort is confiscated from the merchant? Since the City doesn't have jurisdiction to issue Business Licenses does it actually have jurisdiction to make conditions of operation for those licensees? Can the Council legitimately force the collection of taxes without any consideration for the costs to the businesses burdened with their collection ?

If the City Council is to levy new taxes on Seldovia's marine operators, shouldn't public hearings be conducted? This matter has an air of the 'smoked filled' room political activity that characterizes political office holders actions' that won't stand legitimate public scrutiny. I think the matter should be revoked, rescinded or reconsidered at the earliest time to avoid acting to cause one of the tours or guides to avoid the Harbor and the loss of revenue to the merchants who rely on summer visitors.

If the City wants to raise money, why not start a "City owned" (or leased to an operator) "Walking tour of Seldovia". For a pair of 20's (per radio) the city can by a sports radio to be worn by each member of a walking tour- all of whom are paying customers. A guide, who works about 1 or 2 hours a day, can lead folks in a \$5 or \$10 walking tour of Seldovia and raise more revenue by honestly providing value to the visitor. If 70 or 80 people arrive and most pay to have someone show them around while listening to a calm, well written script by a knowledgeable voice in their ear bud; no one is disturbed by the group, the City can make a real contribution to Seldovia, help someone with a summer job, AND make more money that this ill advised head tax. Seldovia seems like it will benefit more from people who're trying to make it a more inviting place to visit not people who're trying to charge admission.

While this example of a simple economic venture is provided as an illustration of a positive method of raising monies, many other means are available to the City; all of which could actually contribute to Seldovia instead of making the statement to visitors they're not welcome unless guests pay the City to come here.

Kevin Morin
The BridgeKeepers Inn

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