

Public Comment

October 8, 2025

Ref: Cruise ship activity

Good afternoon,

My name is Ashlyn Brown and I am a local business owner and marine trades advocate. I have spoken to some of you individually about my concerns regarding the increase of American Cruise Line visits and their proposal for a long term agreement with guarantees.

Today I wish to state my opposition to both- - for the record - - and I speak for many of others in my community who feel the same or stronger.

I realize the ACL proposal is not on the agenda for a vote, I hope you will officially reject the proposal so that ACL understands ; they are strategically welcome in limited numbers but that this community is not on bended knee.

There are very strong feelings here against any sort of "cruise ship culture" . Conversations continue with business owners about the reality on the ground, in our stores and on our streets. There is much more information to gather.

Pedestrians in town, especially during the slower seasons represent POTENTIAL sales opportunities but many businesses admit that cruise ship passengers have not translated into significant revenues, if any at all.

ACL stated in their verbal sales pitch that they want to offer excursions more than shopping and they have since brought in their own mega busses to carry passengers from Union Wharf to the City Hall Museum and to look through the bus windows at our victorian architecture.

This is classic cruise ship modus operandi and just the next step as they feel more comfortable to expand their operations here. I find this alarming.

I ask this commission to support our town by standing strong and remaining independent of the temptations offered by major outside corporate investors with mandates to serve themselves and to remember that Port Townsend, as a home or destination, has way more to offer than most small towns.

This town has historically been a "good example of independent and creative solutions" while avoiding traps that other towns have fallen into.

This is a deep subject and we can do much better, of course. But I firmly believe a town that works well for locals is most often a favorite for visitors. That cultural strength we have is threatened when cruise ships move in. I think we need to get a handle on this and manage it carefully..

I am, with others, continuing an ongoing effort to provide economic and social feedback on this topic. Thank you for your consideration and patience.

Good afternoon Commissioners and staff,

My name is Alison Hero. I have a unique perspective about leasing a dock from the Port of Port Townsend. As far as I know, David and I might be the only other people that have leased a dock from the Port of Port Townsend.

My partner David and I have owned and operated the Silverwater Cafe since 1989. Most of you know that we started with a little fish and chips cart on the old Quincy st ferry dock. Since David was a commercial fisherman at the time, he attended a Port meeting where the commissioners were discussing the potential demolition of the dock. He asked if they would consider leasing the dock, if we were willing to do the repairs and improvements necessary to make it safe and viable. We worked with the Port, the city and shorelines and came up with a plan to create a public space on the waterfront with picnic tables and an open area for people to spend time near the water. We paid for and did the improvements, and built a small fish and chips cart that people could access from the shore or the water, paddling up to the dock, putting in their order, and receiving their food from a basket we would lower down to them. We leased the small cafe behind the town tavern and opened the Silverwater in October of 1989 with ten employees. David became the president of Mainstreet, and we worked together at supporting the community that we love. Mainstreet was focused on the idea of encouraging the locals to spend their dollars here, and creating a thriving, sustainable community, economically and socially.

Fast forward 36 years and we moved down the street. We grew to a staff of 51 people. Over the years we have employed well over 1000 people, giving many young kids their first jobs and teaching them the value of working hard, and working for your community. As we grew, we were able to start supporting the amazing resources that were growing along with us, such as Centrum and the Wooden Boat Foundation. We believed that these were the way that Port Townsend could continue to thrive, because nowhere else will you find such a beautiful seaport town with this amount of magic and enthusiasm, with a working waterfront and the tremendous amount of arts that are supported and involved here.

We are all aware of how fortunate we are to be living here in a time when the world often feels disconnected and divided. We care about one another and share a common sense of connection. But what we have created here together is very fragile.

If Mainstreet is supporting this, then I strongly disagree with them because as we have felt that their compass has gone adrift over the years, and their mission changed to encourage tourism and expansion rather than supporting the community that we have invested in. With all the tourism has come a rising cost of housing that makes it nearly impossible to find rentals for the employees of the businesses here. Before we grow more, we need to take care of what we have and who we are, and provide housing for young families that want to live here and contribute here.

I am extremely concerned with the changes that will take place if you commit to allowing this Cruise line into Port Townsend on a more permanent basis. Of course everyone wants to come see our home. It is like nothing else in the world. I, and many of my friends, family and acquaintances do not feel comfortable with what comes to town with this commitment that you are considering giving. These cruise ships, which provide all of the meals included in the cost of the cruise (sidenote, we have seen zero dollars from their visitors), are now already creating tours on very large buses that will be driving through our neighborhoods and downtown streets. We will likely see here what has happened to most of the other small towns that have allowed this to happen. And it will likely strip away the character of our community. I ask that you take the time necessary to understand the full impact if you allow this to take place. If nothing else, do not be in such a hurry to make this decision until we have time to learn the full impact of it, and how it will change the future of our precious home.

We can support our community from within, supporting our community members to thrive, or we can sell out for the amount of money from a lease to an enormous corporation that has no vested interest in the community here itself, only what it has to offer to the guests aboard. I already miss the view of the horizon at the end of my street. I believe we will lose much much more, irretrievably, if you allow this cruiseline in. We can do, and have done, so much better. Thank you.