

CITY OF SANTA BARBARA WATERFRONT DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 18, 2021
To: Harbor Commission
From: Mike Wiltshire, Waterfront Director
Subject: **Business Services Report**

CRUISE SHIP PROGRAM UPDATE

Background: Santa Barbara has welcomed cruise ships since 2002 and has generally seen an increase in overall annual visits since the program's inception. Cruise ship visits are limited to non-peak tourist (or tourism) seasons, September through May, and have proven to be an important contributor to the local business economy. A 2013 survey by Visit Santa Barbara found cruise ship visitors had a \$2.4 million annual impact on the local economy and the program continues to receive the strong support of the Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce, Visit Santa Barbara, and Downtown Santa Barbara.

Impacts of COVID-19 on the Cruise Ship Program: The first localized economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in mid-March of 2020 when businesses were required to either shut down or significantly modify existing operations. The cruise ship industry was significantly impacted and immediately cancelled 24 scheduled visits to Santa Barbara between March and December 2020. The last ship to visit Santa Barbara was March 4, 2020. The cruise ship industry has cancelled all cruises through May 2021 including no visits to Santa Barbara through the end of the fiscal year.

Cruise Ship Program and COVID: Going Forward: On October 30, 2020, the Center for Disease Control ended its "No Sail Order" and issued a "Framework for Conditional Sailing Order" which provides a phased approach to cruise ship voyages for the cruise ship industry. The phased approach includes, among other requirements:

- (1) Establishment of laboratory testing of crew onboard cruise ships in U.S. waters;
- (2) Fifteen (15) simulated voyages designed to test a cruise ship operators' ability to mitigate COVID-19 on cruise ships;
- (3) A formal certification process; and
- (4) A return to passenger voyages in a manner that mitigates the risk of COVID-19 introduction, transmission, or spread among passengers and crew onboard ships and ashore to communities.

In addition, a number of cruise lines are now requiring passengers to be vaccinated in order to board the ship and must provide proof of full inoculation (one or two dose vaccinations) at least 14 days prior to their cruise. Additionally, crew members will also be required to take a COVID-19 test at embarkation, quarantine for seven days upon arrival, be tested again at the end of that period and must have a negative result before beginning their duties.

Cruise ship visits are typically scheduled 18 to 24 months in advance and there are seventeen (17) previously scheduled cruise ships visits tentatively scheduled to visit Santa Barbara in the fall of 2021. Overall, future demand for cruise ship travel seems high with an increase in tentative visits scheduled for 2022 and 2023.

Waterfront Department staff are monitoring the status of the cruise ship industry as it relates to Center for Disease Control restrictions and protocols and will keep the Harbor Commission apprised of the industry and any proposed visits to Santa Barbara.

Prepared By: Brian Bosse, Waterfront Business Manager