



JOINT PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City of Astoria, Clatsop County, and Port of Astoria leadership meet to discuss Astoria’s upcoming cruise ship season and COVID-19

Joint Statement of Astoria Mayor Bruce Jones, Clatsop County Commission Chair Kathleen Sullivan, and Port of Astoria Executive Director Will Isom

Astoria, OR – March 10, 2020 – With a cruise ship that was scheduled to visit Astoria on March 31 the subject of international attention for a COVID-19 outbreak, local residents have legitimate concerns about managing the safety of cruise ships scheduled to visit beginning in April, and we take those concerns seriously. Yesterday City of Astoria, Clatsop County, and Port of Astoria leaders and staff met to discuss public health issues surrounding cruise ship visits in the current environment, and how our three jurisdictions will collectively evaluate cruise ship safety and make decisions regarding any individual cruise ship visit while the COVID-19 emergency continues.

We agreed on a number of issues:

1. Public health and safety is our number one priority as we monitor this rapidly evolving issue.
2. CDC’s recommendation that travelers “defer all cruise ship travel worldwide” and note that “cruise ship passengers are at increased risk of person-to-person spread of infectious diseases, including COVID-19” is of concern.
3. Grand Princess, officially still scheduled to visit on 31 March, will not visit. First, it is not possible that she will be ready to pass Coast Guard screening protocols on that date. Second, even if she did, we collectively agree that we would decline her visit.
4. The Coast Guard remains, statutorily, the first line of defense for screening of inbound vessels in accordance with the protocols now in place, which may continue to evolve.
5. In addition to Coast Guard screening criteria, we collectively expect that any cruise line contemplating sending cruise ships to Astoria during the COVID-19 crisis, and while the CDC recommendations remain in effect, will proactively demonstrate the most rigorous and enhanced standards of screening of vessel, passengers and crew for COVID-19 before the community would consider accepting a visit.
6. The capacity of the local public health and emergency management infrastructure to absorb patients from an infected vessel is a factor in our considering cruise ship visits. This capacity may change rapidly once infections are found in Clatsop County.
7. Because there will be no scheduled cruise ship visit before April 4 at the very earliest, for the time being we will continue to actively monitor the federal guidelines and requirements as they evolve and plan collaboratively. We will meet well before the first scheduled visit to reassess and decide jointly on a path forward regarding cruise ship visits.