

Dear Madam Mayor, Commissioners and City Staff,

It was recently brought to my attention that information was presented to you which suggests that, by allowing Pier B to use its currently configured bay bottom lease area, the size of ships calling into the Port of Key West could increase significantly, by as much as 50% of the gross registered tons, compared to ships calling into Key West in the past.

The pilots in this port, and in every port in Florida, are licensed and regulated by the State of Florida. Each pilot group is tasked with determining which ships can safely be piloted into their respective ports in the State. The controlling factors for determining the size of vessels calling into Key West have always been the following: vessel dimensions (length, beam, and draft) and vessel maneuvering characteristics in relation to the width and depth of our ship channel. Weather and current conditions, vessel traffic and berthing arrangements are also taken into consideration.

Eight years ago, the Port of Key West effectively reached its vessel size limit with the Celebrity Solstice series of ships, this is well established historical data. We have subsequently turned away many vessel classes, well before the Covid pause, including the Carnival Vista series of ship and NCL Project Breakaway ships based on their length and beam. Over 20 years ago we put our first major restriction in place when the Voyager of the Seas class of vessel was built, and we have turned away countless large ships since then. Prior to that, many small ships with deep draft or poor handling characteristics have been turned away.

In fact, 50% of the current fleet of cruise ships in the industry exceed our port limits and will never be able to call into the Port of Key West. This number keeps growing as the industry builds larger vessels and fewer medium sized cruise ships.

Gross Registered Tonnage (GRT) is never taken into account when determining the feasibility of piloting a vessel into Key West. There is simply no logical argument that ships calling into Key West in the future will increase in size by 50% GRT beyond the size of a Solstice Class vessel. The pilots have been regulating ship size and draft long before the Covid pause and will continue to do so under the authority of the State of Florida.

Best Regards,

Capt. Robert Maguire

Key West Bar Pilots Association