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## WICO Board Member Says Company Should be Prepared Not to See a Single Cruise Ship in 2021

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**Three cruise ships at WICO's port of call Dec. 2015. By. ERNICE GILBERT FOR VI CONSORTIUM**

One of the hardest-hit industries during the Covid-19 pandemic has been cruise ship travel, and while some cruise lines are gearing up to resume leisure travel in April, members of the WICO board are pessimistic that this return date is attainable.

During WICO Interim President and CEO, Anthony Ottlety's report at Friday's board meeting, he mentioned that MSC Cruises, Carnival Cruise Line, Holland America Line, Norwegian Cruise Lines and Disney Cruise Line have a proposed sailing date at the start of April. Royal Caribbean and Princess Cruisers have a proposed sailing date in May. WICO had [previously sought](#) to

resume cruise travel this month, but the pandemic has not let up, and with the United Kingdom strain of the coronavirus set to become the dominate version of the pathogen in the U.S. according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a timeline for cruise ship travel resumption remains elusive.

Enrique Rodriguez, a member of the WICO Board pointed to the over 4,000 people who died in the U.S. as a result of Covid-19 on Jan. 12 alone, and asked for a realistic timeline on when cruise travel would resume at the WICO port.

“That is very difficult. In my conversations with some of the lines, they are anxious to come back, they are making the provisions on the ships to come back,” responded Mr. Ottley. At this particular moment I think the April calls may be a challenge, but I am hoping and wishing for May and anticipate we should have something for May.”

Mr. Rodriguez did not feel the same way. He said, “I doubt we are going to see a cruise ship in 2021, with the rates going the way they are going, the death rates are only moving upward. I think in the back of your mind Mr. Ottley, you should prepare some type of plan that allows us to get to the end of 2021 without a single ship in port.”

The latest CDC update on cruise ship travel states that the federal agency intends to take a phased approach to resuming passenger operations.

"These phases include (1) establishment of laboratory testing of crew onboard cruise ships in U.S. waters; (2) simulated voyages designed to test a cruise ship operators' ability to mitigate COVID-19 on cruise ships; (3) a 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," said the CDC. "These phases will be further determined based on public health considerations including the trajectory of COVID-19 transmission and the demonstrated ability of cruise ships operators to successfully employ measures that mitigate the risk of COVID-19."

There is a possibility that cruise lines will require all their staff and passengers to get vaccinated. If this requirement is finalized it is expected that all start dates will be further pushed back.

The WICO board meeting began with some housekeeping as Joseph Boschulte, WICO chairman, opened by asking the board if there were any nominations for leadership positions on the board. Pash Daswani, WICO board member, moved that the current slate of officers remain in place for one more year and this motion passed with no objections.

Jason Charles, WICO vice-chairman, expressed gratitude for the trust that the board placed in the officers by granting them another year of leadership.