

**PORT OF BENTON
SPECIAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
November 26, 2019**

A. CALL TO ORDER: The Special Commission Meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. at the Port of Benton Commission Meeting Room, 3250 Port of Benton Boulevard, Richland, Washington. Present were Commissioners Jane F. Hagarty, Roy D. Keck and via telephone conference call, Robert D. Larson. Staff members present included Port Counsel, David Billetdeaux, Interim Executive Director, Diahann Howard, PPM®; Director of Finance, Stuart Dezember, CPA, PPM®; Director of Real Estate, Teresa Hancock; Director of Special Projects, John Haakenson; Director of Marketing, Wally Williams; Maintenance staff Jeff Moore and Kyle Dempsey and Administrative Assistant, Kelly Thompson. Also present were Emma Childs, Annette Cary, Ron Howard, Terry Christensen, Kelly Allen, Jerry Martin and May Hays.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Stuart Dezember led those present in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. DISCUSSION ITEMS: Port Counsel opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and providing a statement regarding the employee grievance received on October 17, 2019. He stated the results were received from the independent neutral third-party investigation. He showed a Power Point presentation summarizing the findings of the third party neutral investigative report.

Port Counsel stated the regular Commission meeting would be recessed and the Commission and Counsel would convene an Executive Session to discuss potential litigation and personnel issues. He advised the public they were welcome to take a redacted copy of the findings (either with or without the attachments). Terry Christensen asked if the copies were redacted as they were marked “confidential”. Port Counsel assured him the redacted copies were in fact there and available to the public. Port Counsel then asked if the Commissioners or the Interim Executive Director had any comments. Commissioner Keck and Commissioner Hagarty had no comments. Commissioner Larson stated he liked the process. The Interim Executive Director stated she is very disappointed in Ms. Wixson’s report and felt that is derived from a very narrow lens of information, was without context and timing of items incorrect. She also stated she relied on counsel, auditor and HR consultant to provide her with advice and recommendations. She further stated that she believed the Port could move forward in a positive direction.

D. EXECUTIVE SESSION: The regular Commission Meeting was recessed at 9:46 a.m. and an Executive Session convened pursuant to RCW 42.30.110 (1)(g) and RCW 42.30.110 (1)(i) to evaluate qualifications of an applicant for public employment and discuss personnel and potential litigation. The Commission announced the Executive Session would last no longer than sixty (60) minutes. At 10:46 a.m. the Commission announced the Executive Session would last an additional ten (10) minutes. The Executive Session was adjourned at 10:56 a.m. and the regular Commission Meeting was reconvened.

E. A motion was made by Commissioner Robert Larson, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck and unanimously passed by the Commission authorizing additional training to be provided and taken by the Commission and staff for Open Public Meetings, Ethics and any additional training opportunities that would benefit the Port.

A motion was made by Commissioner Jane Hagarty and seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck and unanimously passed by the Commission authorizing the Interim Executive Director to terminate the current contract with Janice Corbin of Sound Employment Solutions. The Interim Executive Director is further authorized by the Commission to begin searching for another HR employment agency, with input from the staff, to assist the Port of Benton.

A motion was made by Commissioner Robert Larson, seconded by Commissioner Roy Keck and passed by a vote of 2 to 1 (with Commissioner Jane Hagarty voting against the motion) to enter into salary negotiations with Interim Executive Director, Diahann Howard for the permanent Executive Director position. Commissioner Keck offered an increase in salary to a total of \$150,000 per year.

Port Counsel asked if the Interim Executive Director had any questions, wished to negotiate or need to speak to anyone outside of the Commission Meeting. She thanked the Commission and Counsel and advised she would need to discuss the offer with her family.

Commissioner Jane Hagarty stated that there has been turmoil recently and asked everyone to think about what has happened recently and that she hopes that everyone will be supportive as the Port moves forward.

F. ADJOURNMENT: With no further business, the Special Commission Meeting was adjourned at 11:04 a.m.

Robert D. Larson,
Commission Secretary